いつか天魔の黒ウサギ
鏡貴也
2
《月》が昇る昼休み
ファンタジア文庫

月が満ちていくごとに。
月が欠けていくごとに。
呪いが、進んでしまうから。

だから、最後の刻を過ごす相手は、
自分で選びたいの

# いつか天魔の黒ウサギ
## ②《月》が昇る昼休み

「ヒナタはこー言ってた。
『サイトヒメアを飼うの、やめたほうがいいよ、兄さん。
もし自分の分をわきまえずにあの女を飼うつもりなら、
「月」からの侵蝕にだけ気を付けて……』」

「ふざけるな！
弟は……日向は
俺がこの剣で、殺した」

月光は、銀髪の悪魔をにらみつける。

「おね、がい……お願い。大兎。早く逃げて……これ以上は守り、きれ……な……い」
そこでヒメアの言葉は止まり、赤い瞳から、血のように赤い涙が流れ出す。
それを見て大兎は、自分のあまりの力のなさに、うんざりする。
——なんでいつも、なんにもできない——

「もう一度、ここから始める。俺の物語を」
《犠者》・15分間に7回鉄大兎
IRON RABBIT
「私の毒を、あなたに入れる。決して離れられないように」
《最古の魔術師》サイトヒメア
SAITO HIMEA

これまでの物語
宮阪高校1年、鉄大兎。彼の毎日は、平凡に消費されていた。しかし、それは間違いだった。9年前、大兎は人ならざる存在であるサイトヒメアと契約し、『15分間に7回殺されないと死なない体』になっていたのだから。記憶を奪われていた大兎は、ある事件をきっかけにヒメアのことを思い出す。そこから彼の“もうひとつの日常”が始まった――
「違う。俺は天才だ」
《生徒会長》紅月光（GEKKO KUREHA）
「キスしないと、死ぬよ？」
《アンドゥのミライ》安藤美雷（ANDO MIRAI）

# Prologue - The Sky Seen By Tsukuyomi Is Crimson

*Is it love?*

*Or is it affection?*

*The rabbit lives on the moon.*

*The kind rabbit offered itself as stew for a collapsed old man, and God was touched by that kindness and subsequently moved the rabbit to the moon.*

*"The truth is..... the truth is there is something more unpleasant that lives on the moon."*

*But, even as I say that, I smiled slightly at the thought of that fairy tale of the rabbit, and looked up at the moon. Sacrificing itself and becoming stew for the old man; the feelings of that rabbit reached me.*

*Am I in love with that self-sacrifical feelings?*

*Or is that affection?*

*"Do you like him?"*

*He said.*

*I turned around.*

*Usually bearing a kind and gentle face, today, he has a sad face.*

*"....."*

*But on that day, for some reason, I was more interested in the shining moon in the night sky than him.*

*The moon where the rabbit resides.*

*The moon where the kind rabbit resides.*

*The waxing moon.*

*The waning moon.*

*Whenever I gaze at that forever repeating cycle, I'd feel a little sad.*

*It's as if.*

*It's as if I'm looking at myself existing in an eternal loneliness.*

*"....."*

*And at that moment, he asked again.*

*"Answer me please. Do you like him?"*

*At that question,*

*"..... yeah."*

*I replied.*

*With a slight hesitation, and slightly flushed face, I affirmed his question.*

*His face became increasingly more sorrowful. Under the silhouette of the moon, his face became sorrowful.;;*

*"Then."*

*"....."*

*"Then, what about me?"*

*"..... about that."*

*"Are you abandoning me?"*

*"....."*

*"You're kidding right? This is a joke right? You are really, really....."*

*"In love with him."*

*I said it clearly this time, once more. To ascertain myself. To ascertain my own feelings.*

*And then his face contorted in sadness. In contrast to me, his face contorted in terrible, terrible, terrible loneliness.*

*"Why, towards such a fellow....."*

*"....."*

*"He's only a human, you know?"*

*"....."*

*"A foolish, puny, human, you know?"*

*"But....."*

*I answered.*

*"But, at least, he's not stained like us."*

*That's why I'm in love with him.*

*That's the reason why I fell for him.*

*"To say that you are stained....."*

*But, I smiled.*

*Interrupting his words, a seemingly self-mocking smile floated on my face. A mocking, sorrowful smile floated on my face.*

*"..... ahha, you're kind. You..... you're always so kind. But, look. Look at this dirty body. Look at, this, dirty body."*

*On saying that, I spread both my arms out.*

*I showed him my body.*

*With long flowing lavender colored hair, flawless white skin. Long arms and legs, slightly bulging chest.*

*Look.*

*"....."*

*Its mere exterior appearance might be beautiful.*

*But inside that body ---*

*In that eternal, eternal, eternal loneliness, a terribly dark, dirty infestation resides.*

*During moon waxing.*

*During moon waning.*

*A curse advances.*

That's why she smiled.

With mischievous looking, deep crimson eyes, filled with tears, she smiled.

*"..... it's too unbearable. It's too lonely. That's why..... we have to end this, Bahlskra."*

*I called his name.*

*With a terrible sorrowful face, he said.*

*"I want to be with you till the last hour."*

*But I shook my head.*

*"I want to choose..... my own partner to spend the last hour."*

*"And that partner is not me?"*

*"Yeah."*

*"And it's because the person you want to spend the last hour with is that human."*

*"Yeah."*

*"For his sake..... for that human's sake, you're willing to die?"*

*"That's right."*

*"It's a mistake."*

*"Yeah."*

*"You're making a mistake."*

*On hearing those words,*

*"I think so too."*

*After saying that, I smiled. With my mischievous looking eyes. With a slightly delighted, happy face, I turned towards Bahlskra and smiled.*

*Towards my former lover.*

*Towards my former best friend.*

*Towards my former parent.*

*Towards my former child.*

*Towards my former master, with a sad but yet happy face, I smiled and said.*

*"But you know, Bahlskra. I..... I really love Taito. That feeling is already....."*

***<< That feeling is already at the level where I'm willing to let this eternal body disappear into oblivion..... >>***

*The moon waxes.*

*The moon wanes.*

*But that moon is red.*

*Red like the blood.*

*Rather, it's colored with a sinisterly dark, deep, crimson color.*

*"....."*

*Whenever I gaze at that, I will be filled with a tinge of sadness.*

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# Chapter 1 - Incursion

When a human becomes a high school student, as expected, there will be a lot of complicated things arising.

Like the first girlfriend.

Like the first kiss.

Like the first erm ~ that kind of thing, you know.

Anyway, during middle school, there will be times when one would space out, and think about such things that may arise during high school.

Isn't that a little adult-like?

Making a girlfriend, going to school together, hearing *I've made a bento for you ~<3* from his girlfriend, and running along the beach and going *ah haha ~ uwuhuhu ~*, some stupid stuff like that.

Well, that can only happen in dreams. Anyway, isn't it kind of nice to have that, he imagined.

But.

"....."

But, that kind of high school life.

"....."

Never did Kurogane Taito imagine that such a thing could be so savage and nerve-wrecking.

That happened during noon break.

That savage and nerve-wrecking incident happened at lunch time.

The fourth period ended, and the chime rang, following that.

Suddenly, a girl said.

"Hey hey, Taito. For today's lunch, are you going to buy bread as well?"

On hearing that,

"Huh?"

Taito looked to his side. He looked in the direction of the owner of that voice, a young girl who sits in the seat beside his in the classroom.

Beautiful, black medium-length hair, black eyes with large black pupils. Checkered pleated skirt sailor uniform of Miyasaka High.

His childhood friend, Shigure Haruka.

Since elementary six, she had been his neighbor, and on top of that, this spring, they entered the same Miyasaka High, and ended up sitting alongside each other in the same class, an inseparable childhood friend, that Haruka, was looking at him with a happy face that appeared to be scheming something,

"Hey hey hey."

She badgered him,

"..... as I was saying, what?"

Taito asked.

And then Haruka said again.

"I was asking whether Taito is going to buy croquette bread for today's lunch like always."

"Lunch?"

"Yeah."

"Oh yeah, I guess I'll be buying that..... ah, is it that you want me to get something for you? *Errand boy, come*, that whatcha saying?"

Taito said with a slightly mean face, and Haruka responded promptly.

"Cor~rect. Now, errand boy Taito-kun. Go buy some orange juice for Haruka-sama."

"Wait, you're seriously treating me like an errand boy. Well, fine, since it's along the way. Then, pass me the money."

"You're treating!"

"Huh? Hey, don't shit with me, you know?"

Haruka then smiled with a beaming face.

"Just kidding."

"Then, hurry up and pass me the money."

"Having said that, I'm not going to."

Taito responded to her annoying tone with half-opened eyes.

"Erm, what's this? What are you trying to do?"

She smiled again. And then,

"Anyhow, I don't belong to the faction that drinks orange juice during meals!"

She said it like some nonsensical lousy lines of a commercial. She went on to take a flask out of her bag, and then thrust it before him,

"I'm definitely part of the tea faction!"

"As if I know."

"Eehh!? Even when you already know it ~"

"..... no, ah~, since we have been childhood friends for so many years, of course I know..... but what on earth were you trying to tell me all this while? Isn't it about wanting me to buy something for you?"

"That's not it."

"Then, what is it?"

As Taito asked, once again, an incomprehensible intrepid smile floated on her face. Looking at him. Looking at him with her big, round, adorable black eyes.

"You see."

"Yeah."

"I happened to wake up early today."

"Hm."

"And I thought, *alright, I shall get my hands busy and make some bento*, and I ended up making too much....."

And, at that juncture, Taito,

"....."

His eyes widened.

And his body stiffened.

The reason was because he had realized it. Because he had realized it.

Clearly.

Because he had realized that something big was clearly about to happen right here.

"....."

So as to speak, every member in his class was going to realize that something big was about to happen, he thought. The fact is, isn't it really bad if a cute childhood friend of yours tells you that she has made too much bento? Ultra bad, right? Since such a development, without a doubt ---

*Taito, this is a handmade bento~* --> And whistle, a bomb from the rest of the class who sees this. --> A couple created!!

The flow of things would certainly turn out as such. On top of that, Haruka was real popular with the guys in the class, and things might turn out in the following manner: "*Damn you, Taito, don't get too full of yourself, a happy soul like you should eat this*", and after being told that, his desk would be stuffed full with flaky yakisoba bread, and even if he yelled back "*you guys, isn't this bullying, isn't this called bullying?*", it would be followed by "*there's a new law just passed yesterday that says we can do anything to a happy soul, you know!*". There was a possibility of such incomprehensible stuff being told to him, thereby igniting a troubling, fun high school life.

"....."

Taito had always fantasized about such a fun high school life while he was in middle school.

Taito had always fantasized about such a meaninglessly troubling, regular, fun high school life.

"....."

But, the truth about his high school life was different.

The truth about his high school life was quite a different thing altogether.

Somehow, he must have pressed the wrong button somewhere, and his life took a hundred and eighty degree turn, becoming a totally irregular one.

"....."

At that juncture, Haruka said.

Without realizing at all about this abnormality that had descended upon him before he knew it, Haruka said in a lovely, cheerful voice.

"That's why I ended up making Taito's portion as well ~. So eat it gratefully."

Haruka said with a face that clearly showed that she had no idea how the eyes of others would look at this act of a girl making a bento for a guy.

As expected, a commotion started in the class. Whistling sounds. From the determined faces of a few people, it seemed like they were preparing their flaky yakisoba bread. Taito looked around with a troubled face.

"....."

However.

However, the truth was that all these didn't matter to Taito.

Because the real problem.

"....."

The real problem was taking place in another location right now.

Taito turned his eyes to the ceiling of the classroom.

A normal white ceiling with four florescent lights affixed, with nothing appearing out of the ordinary.

However, there appeared to be a black snake-like shadow swimming on that white ceiling. There was no sign of any snake. Only a shadow was slithering on the surface of the ceiling. Taito had no idea when or from where did that come. It was there before he knew it. Swimming about on the white ceiling of the classroom. And then the shadow slithered down along the wall from the ceiling, moved towards the blackboard, moved towards the floor, and weaving its way to the center of the classroom.

And in an instant.

In just an instant, it flew from the floor.

And it flew towards Taito and Haruka.

"Hey hey ~, stop acting like a husband and wife couple already, would you ~"

And engulfed the entire body of the girl called Sakai Satomi who was happily saying that. Satomi looked as if she was about to scream out. But no sound came. In an instant, after engulfing the girl, the shadow returned to the floor. And thus the figure of Satomi had vanished from the classroom.

However, no one in the classroom had noticed.

Since everything happened too quickly, no one in the classroom had noticed.

And at that moment, a girl said,

"Ah-reh, where's Satomi?"

"Eh? She was here just now..... ah-reh, could she have gone to the ladies?"

"Even when she had said to eat our bento together."

"She'll be back in a moment for sure."

Such a conversation took place, but Taito knew. Taito knew that if things were left as it was, Sakai Satomi may never return again.

So as to speak, ten minutes ago, in the middle of the fourth period, during the Mathematics class, Taito already knew of the appearance of that snake.

In the middle of the Mathematics class, all of a sudden, he received a mail on his mobile. The sender of that mail was the student council president of this school, Kurenai Gekkou. In that mail, the following was written.

*"This is an order for my slaves. I've verified that last night, a strange snake has infiltrated the school from another dimension via the student council room. If you encounter, capture it immediately."*

And Taito responded to that mail immediately.

*"Huh? What's up with that all of a sudden?"*

A reply came immediately.

*"Do you not understand Japanese? Small fry."*

*"Who are you calling small fry?"*

*"You."*

*"Damn you, I don't remember letting you call me that."*

*"I'm stating a fact."*

*"Don't shit with me. In the first place, why do I have to listen to your orders? Don't go about making me a student council executive member on your own. I'll kill you, you know?"*

*"Kill me? A small fry killing me? Haha, don't make me laugh. In the first place, who do you think save your shitty life? Even a dog will not forget the favors it received, are you less than a dog, you octopus."*

*"I didn't remember asking you for help, you idiot."*

*"You are the idiot."*

*"You are the one, damn you."*

*"You are."*

After the elementary student-like exchanges went back and forth several times during the Mathematics class, in the end, the annoying student council president sent the following mail.

*"Well, it's fine even if you're not willing to help. But let me just say this. The snake will abduct people and devour them."*

Gekkou wrote in that mail.

And just as what the mail had said, a strange snake had abducted his classmate.

An occurrence that should not have been possible in a normal high school life made Taito cry out,

"..... damn, she really got eaten."

As Taito said that, he stood up. And was about to chase after the shadow snake.

And of course, Taito's action caused Haruka to utter *"eh?"* in surprise as she was taking out the bento from her bag. Following that, the rest of the class also

suddenly went silent with a *"aren't you being too much of a tease?"* look on their faces.

Taito then frantically,

"..... uhmm, ermmm, this is not what it seems..... erhh, you know, Haruka, I'm sorry. I got some student council work to attend to and have to go to the student council room at noon-break. So, I don't really have time to eat lunch....."

At the instant he said that, *crap*, he thought. It was a really crappy thing to say, he thought.

Because, just a while ago, he did say that he was going to buy some bread. And yet, he just said that he didn't have time to eat lunch because of his student council work; didn't that consequently sounded like a blatant excuse for not wanting to eat Haruka's bento? *Am I an idiot?*

Taito grimaced.

But before his grimace came, Haruka's face contorted in sadness. She looked a little hurt. *This is really bad*, Taito thought and was about to follow up with an explanation, but before that could happen, Haruka broke into a smile.

For some reason, she broke into a smile.

And then.

"Ah, ah, is that so! So as to speak, Taito has become an executive of the student council, yeah. If you have student council work to see to, then it can't be helped!"

She said that with a smile, appearing unconcerned. She put the bento which she had taken out back into her bag.

On seeing that.

"No, you've misunderstood....."

But, all of a sudden.

"Is Taito here ~?"

The voice of a girl called out.

And the eyes of the entire class turned towards that voice. Taito as well. The voice came from the entrance of the classroom. The head of a girl was poking into the classroom from the entrance, and she was peering in his direction.

A girl wearing a red pleated skirt, and the sailor uniform of Miyasaka High.

She's definitely not a Japanese; possessing long lavender colored hair bathed in a glowing prismatic radiance of seven colors. And flawless porcelain white skin. With a high nose and glossy, beautiful pink lips. A slender body with a nice figure. Mischievous looking deep crimson eyes.

Looking at her figure, all of the students in the classroom took in a breath. They took in a breath to drink in her unworldly beauty.

Her name is Saito Himea.

A mixed blood beauty who just transferred into this school a week ago, having come from a small country in Europe, she looked around the classroom and her deep crimson eyes then settled on him.

As she did that, her beautiful face beamed in delight. And she waved to him,

"Good morning Taito ~!"

She greeted.

On seeing that, Taito grimaced.

"Once again, you've managed to come at the worst possible time....."

But, interrupting him, Himea continued.

"Let's have lunch together again! I got some money from Gekkou today, and tried buying some croquette bread!"

She lifted up the hand that was holding onto a croquette bread. With a jubilant look on her face.

And at that instant.

"....."

At that instant, Taito could feel the air in the classroom freeze. It was definitely at subzero temperatures, he felt.

Taito shuddered at that feeling. And thought. This was quite different from the high school life he had imagined while he was in middle school, he thought. *What's with this development? Is this something like a harem? This happens a lot in manga, right? In moe or love comedy types, an ordinary guy will be surrounded by a 'harem' of girls right? And the girls will go "XX-kun belongs to me, get it!" while grabbing him at the same time, and the guy will go, in a resigned manner, "it sure is tough being me, uwuhehe"*; Taito had at least read one such serialized manga in a magazine or Jump.

"....."

And at that moment, Taito gave a sidelong glance at Haruka. He looked at the Haruka who was putting away her bento with a smiling face.

He could see her eyes glistening with tears which were on the verge of flowing out; clearly she did not resemble any of the manga girls who would be energetically screaming *"XX-kun belongs to me, get it!"*.

On top of that, the girls surrounding Taito were directing stares overflowing with killing intent at him.

The guys, obviously envious of Taito's 'harem', were directing venomous looks towards him.

In response to that, Taito.

Taito.

"..... ah~, erm....."

He said.

But in that instant,

"Don't you 'ah~' us!"

The girls shouted angrily. And they did it in a low voice that was unthinkable for girls.

And Taito shivered, *No no, this isn't the kind of development I read about in manga right? And neither is this the kind of high school life I've fantasized during middle school right?*.

He shuddered.

Furthermore, he didn't have a lot of time. Even though he was trembling at his seemingly love-life complications, he didn't have the time to deal with it.

At any rate, there was a person who could be on the verge of being killed.

A strange snake had abducted and devoured a girl.

Taito needed to go save her!

"Wait, what kind of high school life is this!"

Murmured Taito in a soft voice as he looked up at the ceiling vexedly. He looked at the place where the shadow snake was making its exit. It was going out of the classroom via the rear doorway of the classroom.

In other words, Taito should just leave the classroom by the rear.

Not by the front door where Himea was, but by the rear.

After ascertaining that,

"Ah~"

Uttered Taito.

And once again,

"Didn't we tell you not to *ah*~ us! Quickly apologize to Haruka!"

The girls in his class yelled.

"Stop fooling around and make your stance clear!"

Shouted another girl.

But Taito ignored them as he shuddered. He looked at Haruka. He looked at the Haruka who was trying her best to hold back her tears. And then,

"Haruka."

He said. And,

"Uh?"

She replied half-heartedly. And looked up at him. As she did that, she blinked once, perhaps from realizing that she had managed to hold back her tears. And her long eyelashes no longer glistened with teardrops.

Looking at Haruka's face.

"Erm. Thank you for the bento. I'll eat it in the student council room, so can I have it?"

He said. This time round, Haruka was really on the verge of tears on hearing that, but having run out of time, he opened her bag without asking, took the bento and rushed off.

On seeing that,

"Wait, are you running away!? Kurogane-kun!!"

Shouted the girls but he ignored them anyway.

Wait, wouldn't this lead to bullying later on? Wouldn't he get ostracized by the whole class later? Despite feeling exasperated, he continued running.

He flew out of the classroom through the back door.

As he did that, Himea caught up to him. She was following behind him with light running steps. And peering into his face,

"Good morning, Taito."

She greeted.

Taito replied while he was looking up at the ceiling. While he was looking up at the ceiling of the corridor, where the snake appeared to be making off with a swimming motion at a very fast speed, he replied.

"Good morning Himea. Well, this isn't really the hour to be saying that though. I'll get angry if you're skipping class too much you know?"

On hearing that, Himea looked up at him. Her usual mischievous-looking deep crimson eyes widened slightly in surprise,

"Eh? Eh? What class? Is there a place in this building where some great scholars are lecturing?"

On hearing those words, Taito scowled with a tiresome look.

That's how things were.

It's as if one cannot talk any sense with this mixed-blood beautiful young girl. At any rate, she seems to be the royal bloodline of a kingdom called Pilehne, a small country of Europe that was wiped out from a coup d'état that had taken place a few days ago; and since her father is a Japanese, it seems like she can speak Japanese, but as a result of being raised over there, she's still unfamiliar with how things work here, and because of that, please get along well with her ~ --- and in that exaggerated fashion, she joined his class.

That Himea said.

She too looked at where Taito was looking, at the swimming shadow snake on the ceiling, but somehow, without showing any sign of surprise,

"Ah, well then, is that shadow-like snake Mister Scholar? Indeed, I've heard that the N a g a Evil Snake that lives in the **Swamp of Nightmare Demons** have

accumulated great wisdom, but are you going to call that N a g a Evil Snake to start a lecture here?"

At that incomprehensible conversation started by her, Taito said.

"Huh? Naga? What's that? What are on earth you talking about....."

But his words stopped there.

The snake shadow that had abducted a girl and was making off along the ceiling seemed to have noticed them. The snake turned towards them. Just like when it abducted the girl, the shadow leaped off from the ceiling. With amazing speed. *Ah!*, Taito shouted but it was too fast for him. The snake went for Taito's neck. And closed its jaws on him. Snap, an incomprehensible sound rang out and he could tell that his head had separated from his body. The pain was reasonably severe, and with that, his head danced through the air. The world swung around him. His head fell onto the corridor and soon following that, Taito's body fell to the ground as well.

And then Taito.

"....."

Taito promptly died.

There was no human being who could still live with his head disengaged from his body.

With that, the snake made off again. It turned round the corner of the corridor and disappeared from sight.

"Eh? Eh? What's this what's this?"

As she cried out in surprise, Himea stopped in her tracks as well. She looked down the corridor. She looked down at Taito's severed head and his body.

A regular high school girl would probably scream out at this juncture. The severed head and body of a student from the same year was lying on the ground. It would be normal if the girl had screamed out *"Kyaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa"*.

But without any hint of being surprised,

"Are you ok?"

She asked.

The severed head of Taito, who should have died, replied,

"No no, surely, I can't be ok with my head severed right?"

And then, he propped himself up and got up. Of course, without his head attached, only his headless body got up. Following that, the headless body moved and seemed to search the floor for a while, and then picked his head up. And attached his head to his body. *Gyu gyu*, after that strange sound was heard, his head connected itself to the body.

"Alright, I'm back."

He said.

He came back to life from a situation in which an ordinary human being would have been two hundred and eighty-seven percent dead,

"But really, that snake didn't just abduct a girl, but came attacking as well! Isn't it really bad for such a thing to be loitering around the school?"

He said.

And then he frantically looked around. The day such a scene gets seen by other students, would be the day when shouts of *"rather than the snake, you are the real monster rightttttttttt"* get directed towards him, and a Mulder or Scully[1] from the FBI or CIA will come knocking --- but fortunately, no one noticed. So as to speak, there were hardly any students in the corridor. Everyone was in the middle of their lunch.

Taito breathed a sigh of relief and looked at Himea.

He looked at the girl who, if she were a normal girl, would have been crying out *"Help me Mama ~"* with tears flowing as she looked upon this scene.

For some reason, that mixed blood pretty young girl who was said to have come from Europe was looking at Taito with a face full of delight.

"....."

Then again, the more he looked at her, the less her lavender colored hair and deep crimson eyes resembled that of a human, even if she were a mixed blood right! Taito felt like making such a retort, but as far as his homeroom teacher and classmates were concerned. they had no doubts about her being a mixed blood beauty, it seemed.

That was what they believed about this young girl who possesses an unworldly beauty.

No, this young girl was really not of this world.

"What's the matter Taito? Is your sliced up head still hurting?"

She said as she smiled. Parting her lovely lips, she smiled. As she did that, he could catch a glimpse of them beyond her pink lips.

He could see those small teeth that could not possibly belong to a human being.

<< V a m p i r e **Most Ancient Sorcerer >>** Saitohimea.

That was her true name.

That was the true name of the girl who was neither from Europe, nor a mixed blood, nor was she a << Human >>.

That << V a m p i r e **Most Ancient Sorcerer >>** Saitohimea stretched her hand out towards him. Delightedly, she stretched her hand out towards him. Affectionately, she stretched her hand out towards him.

"....."

And then she touched Taito's neck which had been severed from his body just a moment ago.

She touched the back of his neck at which she had bitten with her teeth and injected her << Black Magic **P o i s o n** >> nine years ago.

She touched the back of his neck at which she had injected the << Contract >>.

Due to that << Black Magic **P o i s o n** >>, Taito had ceased to be a normal << Human Being >>.

He had acquired a conditional form of immortality.

She had placed on him a strange curse which prevents him from dying unless he was killed 7 times within the span of 900 seconds --- in other words, within an interval of 15 minutes.

They've made a vow to be with each other for eternity, but yet, she was suddenly abducted by a monster and Taito had forgotten her existence for several years. Even when she had hollered in tears, he still did not remember --- something along those lines somehow, erm, if we go into the details, a lot had happened in any case and now was not the time to concern ourselves with that.

At any rate, right now, there was a violent snake, which on top of being able to nonchalantly bite off the head of a human being, had abducted a girl and was now rampaging within the school premises. If they don't go after it, things might become very serious.

So to speak.

"Geez, where did my ordinary high school life go, I wonder?"

As he said in an exasperated manner, he took out his cellphone from the pocket of his pants. He flipped it open. And scrolled to the 'I' page. An entry 'Irritating Idiot Gekkou' appeared and he moved the cursor to the 'call' button, and pressed it. After the ringing tone sounded for a while, the 'connected' word appeared on the LCD. As he put the phone to his ear, the irritating idiot on the other side spoke.

*"What?"*

Taito answered.

"I found it."

*"The snake?"*

"Yeah."

*"Did you catch it?"*

"No, it got away."

*"Tch. A useless person causes trouble just by existing."*

"What!? Then, catch it by yourself!"

*"Whatever, just explain the situation quickly, trash. Where are you right now?"*

"Huh? Ah ~, I'm in the corridor in front of my class, and running towards the stairs."

*"So you're on the third floor?"*

"Yeah."

*"The snake has moved to another level, I suppose."*

"Probably."

*"Then I'll head towards the fourth floor, you go down to the second floor. And as soon as you find it, kill it."*

"No no no wait a sec. That snake abducted a girl from my class you know. If I kill it, then that girl will also....."

But he was interrupted by Gekkou there,

*"Not just her. Currently, there are a total of twenty three people who have gone missing. In order not to cause a panic, I'm keeping the teachers in check, and have them treating the missing people as having left school early. But there's no need to worry. If a Geinvikku dies, it will spit out the undigested parts."*

"What do you mean by undigested parts!"

*"Exactly what I've said. Pray that the Geinvikku hasn't digested them yet."*

And the line was cut.

"Don't go hanging up on me!"

Taito yelled as he closed his phone as well. And returned it to his pocket.

From behind him, Himea started,

"I could hear Gekkou ~. That snake is not a Naga Evil Snake, but a Geinvikku **Moth's Great Snake**."

As she said that, he turned around.

"Himea, you know of it?"

And she nodded in acknowledgement.

"Yup, it's quite famous."

"Is it bad news?"

But, she shook her head.

"Nope. It's not that bad ~. Indeed, I've heard that the Geinvikku **Moth's Great Snake** gets nourishment from eating humans and thereafter sprouts wings and flies back to its nest, so it's really harmless. More importantly, Taito, let's hurry and go eat our lunch! We also need nourishment! Nourishment!"

The beaming face of Himea, who just as one would expect was completely indifferent to humans, said as she lifted up her croquette bread.

On hearing that,

"That's not harmless at allllllllllllllllllllllllllllllllllllll!?"

Taito yelled without thinking.

But the happy Himea ignored his words completely and continued.

"This thing called croquette bread is really delicious. I've thought that the food of humans were uncouth and dirty, but I love all those which Taito had introduced to me."

"No, as I was saying, this is not the time for that."

"That yamasoba bread is also tasty!"

"You mean yakisoba bread."

"That's the one."

"Erm, as I was saying, now....."

"I'm really happy to be with Taito. I'm really happy that I'm not alone."

She said in a really happy voice.

On hearing those words,

"....."

On hearing her say that she was happy that she wasn't alone, Taito looked at her. He looked at her delighted, slightly strong willed, ebullient, deep crimson eyes.

And he recalled the kind of despair she had tasted during the past nine years.

During these nine years, she was interrogated again and again, and in the end, she was imprisoned, all alone, in a place with no sound and no light, a world seemingly devoid of anything.

And during that period, he had completely forgotten about her. Not accomplishing anything, living each of his days in an ordinary fashion.

As he thought of that, he made a slightly troubled face.

However, she looked intently at his face,

"Taito."

She said.

"I love Taito."

She said all of a sudden.

Following that, she once again stroked his neck happily. She went on further to hug him.

In the corridor of the school during noon break!

He was hugged by a girl!

In that instant, a commotion broke out around them.

*"Hyyuuu"*, *"Woahhh"*, *"Call the teachers"*, such a commotion of voices started around them.

Even though the incident earlier when Taito's head got sent flying off flashily causing him to die went unnoticed, the students immediately spotted a lovey dovey thing like this.

Taito then began,

"..... hey hey hey, Himea, wait a sec....."

"I'm not waiting ~"

"Erm."

"I'm not letting go."

As she said that, she applied more strength into her embrace.

In response to that, Taito had a *I don't know what to do* face and raised up both his arms,

"..... ermmmm, by the way, it's really embarrassing to do this in public in Japan."

And she replied.

"I'm not a Japanese though ~"

"No, even so."

"Besides, I've been apart from you for the past nine years. I've been feeling lonely all those times, so now I need to make up for that."

"But, but really, regarding how the others are looking at us....."

But at that juncture, Himea looked up at him,

"If there is any interference, I'll kill them ~"

She said with her deep crimson eyes beaming happily. She further went on to look up at the ceiling with those eyes,

"Such as the snake that has interfered with our lunch."

On hearing that, Taito nodded in a frantic manner.

"That, that's right! We have to quickly deal with that....."

But, at that moment, Himea further went on to say. With her mischievous, jubilant, but somehow sharp, wary eyes, she looked intently at the bento box that Taito was holding in his right hand,

"..... and as well as that slutty little girl who tried to seduce Taito."

She said.

And then,

".....eh?"

Taito uttered.

And then he looked at her face.

She was smiling. As expected, she was smiling happily, delightedly.

But.

But, ermm.

"..... Hi, Himea, aren't you misunderstanding something?"

"What?"

"Erm, errhh, regarding Haruka."

"Hmm. So that kid is called Haruka."

"Err~mm."

But, at that moment, Himea stopped clinging to Taito. And looked up at him with a smiling face,

"Just kidding. It was a joke. I wasn't angry, so there's no need to be so tense."

She said.

She was gazing at him with a really gentle smile. But, Taito noticed that she looked a little different than usual. Behind her lips. Behind her lips where her teeth was visible, Taito noticed that they were sharper than before.

According to Taito's memory, her teeth was normally hardly visible. Except for the times when she was using her Black Magic **P o i s o n** and when she was getting very worked up over something, her teeth should be hardly visible.

In other words, she was now getting very worked up over something.

That worked up Himea said with a smiling face.

"There's no problem. Since I know Taito loves me."

"Ermm about that."

"It'll be a good thing to kill the interfering girl."

"Hey oiy!"

Once again, Himea smiled. She smiled mischievously.

"It was a joke ~. Taito is so cute."

And she patted Taito's head. Since she was shorter than him, she had to stretch herself to pat him on the head, but in spite of that, it felt like he was being treated like a kid.

No, the truth was he was like a kid to her.

To the V a m p i r e **Most Ancient Sorcerer** who has lived for tens of thousands of years ---

As the tens of thousands of years old V a m p i r e **Most Ancient Sorcerer** patted him, he said.

"Erm, so."

"Yeah?"

"It's about time; I want to go after the snake, is that ok?"

But, Himea said.

"There's no need to."

"Heh? Why?"

And she stopped patting him. Then, she turned around and faced the the corner of the corridor from where the snake had disappeared, and said.

"With that level of magic, I can erase it even from here."

"Seriously!?"

Said Taito, in response to which Himea turned her head around,

"Fufu. I'm getting to like that *Seriously!?* word that Taito loves to use ~. That means *Really?* right?"

"Yeah."

"Then, seriously!? Why!"

As Himea puffed out her small chest and said that with no sign of tension, Taito's earlier anxiety also subsided,

"What the heck. Am I the only one who's all worked up like an idiot ~"

As he loosened up, in the next instant.

"Ah-reh, this is bad."

Himea said all of a sudden.

And she turned around again.

She looked in the direction of the corner of the corridor from where the snake had disappeared. No, she was looking beyond the corridor, at a place where only she could see, gazing into the distance.

On seeing that,

"What's wrong?"

Asked Taito, and she replied in a slightly agitated voice.

"..... the, the G e i n v i k k u **Moth's Great Snake**'s magical power just increased all of a sudden."

"...meaning?"

"Wow, wow, amazing."

"As I was asking, what?"

"Wow ~, this feeling, it has probably devoured about forty humans in one breath."

Those words.

On hearing those words.

For an instant, with not the slightest bit of comprehension, Taito looked at Himea in a dumbfounded manner, and then,

"You're kidding!?"

"Really."

"Isn't that an entire class?"

"Ah, it went to the neighboring class."

"Wait."

"The presence of another forty human beings disappeared....."

"Wait, wait a seconddddddddddddddddddddd!"

But, without responding to Taito's voice, she again looked intently into the distance,

"..... then again, that probably isn't just a G e i n v i k k u **Moth's Great Snake**....."

"Then what's that?"

"I don't know, but it's probably bad news."

Himea said.

Bad news.

He really didn't know exactly how bad that was, but if a V a m p i r e **Most Ancient Sorcerer** like her said that it was bad, it was probably very bad.

That's why.

"Ah geez, damn."

Taito started running again. Himea followed behind him as well.

At the same time.

Suddenly, *ringggg*, the fire alarm started sounding off throughout the school. Following that, from the speakers installed in each of the classrooms,

*"Erm ~, ahem ahem, mike test, mike test --- no, the broadcast has already begun, principal! --- eh? Ah, is that so? Er~mm, on the request of the FDMA (Fire and Disaster Management Agency), we have an unexpected disaster evacuation drill test. Under the guidance of the teachers, the students are to evacuate to the school courtyard in an orderly fashion ~"*

An announcement rang out.

*Seriously*, *we're in the middle of our lunch*, such cries were heard from the students, but the announcement continued.

*"By the way, after the evacuation drill, the students will be dismissed from school for the rest of the day."*

Cries of *woaaaaaaahhhhhhh, alright!* were then heard.

*"On top of that, this evacuation drill is also a sudden thing for the teachers, and if the teachers don't perform well, it will also affect your bonus reviews so please do your best ~"*

The principal's voice said cheerfully, sending the students roaring in laughter.

The cheerful voice gave them the impression that there was no real fire or incident, and that it was really just a practice, and thus the announcement ended.

But.

"This means....."

As Taito said, Himea continued,

"Ah, another class disappeared."

"This is that righttt, a really bad thing is happening righttt."

On saying that, he turned around the corner of the corridor, and headed towards the stairs at the end.

"So, Himea, that fella who's bad news, is he above or below?"

And she answered.

"I felt the magical power from above though."

"Alright, then we shall go up!"

At the moment when he said that, a teacher who was running desperately up the stairs towards them came into view. A strung-up man wearing silver-rimmed glasses. It was Taito's class 1-3's homeroom teacher, Kariya Tooru. Kariya started,

"Oiy Kurogane, where are you going? Get back to class!"

He yelled and Taito responded,

"Sorry Sensei, I'm excusing myself for today!"

He said as he rushed up the stairs.

Following that, Himea said as well,

"I'm also excusing myself ~ ♪"

And she climbed up the stairs.

And from behind them,

"Fools, this is not the time! Just get back to the classroom! I can't say this loudly but, right now, some demonic force that's passing through has infiltrated the school."

It seemed like this had spread among the teachers.

On top of that, as Kariya seemed to be coming after Taito, Taito stopped in his tracks and turned around.

"It's dangerous so don't follow after me!"

"What the? What do you mean by telling a teacher not to follow after you! That's enough, get back to the classroom. The interior of the school is extremely dangerous right now!"

Said Kariya. He caught hold of Taito's collar and tried to pull him back.

Taito scowled,

"Ahhh, jeez, this is really not the time....."

At that moment, from above the stairs,

"Kyaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa!?"

A girl's scream was heard. Taito and Kariya looked up at the same time. And with a stern expression, Kariya began,

"..... shit, the demon is there. Alright, Kurogane, you guys get back to the classroom. After that, get Ishigaki-sensei from class 2 to bring class 3 along for the evacuation."

After saying that, he further went on to ascend the stairs.

"Hey, wait a second. Where are you going?"

This time round, it was Taito who was grabbing on to Kariya's shirt.

With a matter-of-fact face, he then said,

"I'm going to save the students."

"No no, I'm asking you how do you plan to do that?"

"Even so, I'm going. I shall leave class 3 to you, Kurogane!"

Said Kariya who appeared to have made some kind of determined decision from his expression,

"That's why I'm saying it's not about that! This is something for us to deal with."

But, without listening to his words, Kariya just kept on ascending the stairs.

"Didn't I tell you to wait!"

"I'm not waiting. You guys quickly get back to the classroom!"

"Hey."

"Shut up."

"Argghhhhhh jeez, erm, how do I get through to this guy?"

As Taito said with a troubled expression, Himea replied from behind.

"How about killing him?"

"There's no way we can do that righttttttttttttt!"

He yelled, but then said,

"But, since this is an emergency, I shall use that ~"

He then pinned Kariya from behind. And on top of that, he strangled his neck. Of course, that caused to Kariya to exclaim in surprise,

"You, you, what....."

"I'm sorry, Sensei."

"Don't shit with....."

But at that moment, he tightened his grip on Kariya's neck. He tightened his grip in the same manner which his upperclassmen at karate had used to bully him, telling him to stop pretending to be a good kid.

As he did that, Kariya fell down readily. He had lost consciousness. He caught hold of Kariya's limp body and placed him in a sleeping position on the stairs. He put his finger close to his teacher's nose to ascertain that he was still alive, and then,

"Alright! I'll surely get suspended later!!"

He said.

And then he looked up at the fourth floor.

Silence had already returned to the fourth floor, there was no longer any presence of any people at all from the places where the screams were heard.

Taito scowled,

"Uwah geez, we're really late but, let's go anyway, Himea!"

"Uhn ♪"

And the two of them rushed up the stairs, to the fourth floor where the monster was waiting.

# Chapter 2 - The Silver Servant

The location shifted a little to the other side.

The fourth floor of Miyasaka High's west premises.

Along the corridor that extended from the stairs, class 5, 6, 7, and at the end of all that, the classroom of class 8.

Gekkou,

"....."

Opened the door of that classroom slowly.

In accordance with the rules of Miyasaka High, his jet black hair reached down till the jet black collar of his uniform, covering his neck.

With cold rational eyes, and well arranged features.

Hanging from the left side of his waist was a jet black scabbard in which a sword used for thrusting, resembling an epee rapier, was sheathed, and his left hand was holding a cellphone to his ear.

And with a cold voice, Gekkou said to the party on the other side of the phone.

"..... so, is the evacuation of the students completed? Principal. Yeah. I've heard the school-wide broadcast. But don't tarry too much. If the way you handle this is unsatisfactory, the fate of your career will be..... that's right. Yeah. It's fine if you got it. Regarding this passing by demon, as always, we of the student council will exterminate it. There's no need to contact the police. Yeah. Yeah. That's the way it is. Well, if anything happens, I'll contact you again."

After saying that, he terminated the call with a button press and returned the cellphone to his pocket. Then, he turned his sight towards the classroom of class 8.

The classroom was dark.

Even though it was noon break, the curtains were drawn. He turned his gaze to the projector; it seemed like it was used during the lesson before noon break. That's why the curtains were drawn and the room was dark.

Using the switch of the florescent lights at the entrance, Gekkou tried turning them on but nothing happened. Looking up at the ceiling, the lights were destroyed, and the desks and chairs were also in disarray.

There were no students in the classroom. So as to speak, the classrooms for classes 5, 6, and 7 which he had passed by on his way here were devoid of any students.

And all the students in this class 8 had also disappeared.

"So the entire fourth floor is wiped out."

After muttering that softly, Gekkou turned his sight to the blackboard of the classroom.

He could see that totally dark blackboard in the dark classroom.

Following his gaze, at the center of that blackboard, darker than the blackboard, was a coiled up shadow that had taken the form of a snake.

He looked intently at that squirming form of the shadow of a strange monster in the classroom.

A smile floated on Gekkou's face as he looked at the shadow of that monster,

"..... now. You seemed to enjoy your lunch in a surprisingly flashy manner in my school, but it's about time to end it. The noon break is about to end too."

After saying that, he took a step into the classroom.

Instantly. With a swoosh, a portion of the shadow came flying from the blackboard. The head-like portion of a snake came biting towards Gekkou.

"Hn."

As if he had predicted that action, Gekkou twisted his body and dodged it. As he did that, the snake's jaws closed in on the idol poster that was put up on the wall behind him. The poster was shredded readily, and on top of that, a hole opened in the wall and this classroom was consequently connected to the neighboring classroom.

Gekkou quickly turned around,

"Tch. Aim for me properly, amateur. It would be a bother to fix up a destroyed classroom later."

He tutted.

The snake then turned its head around to face him again. And it seemed about to attack.

In response to that movement,

"....."

Gekkou drew the sword at his waist. Drawn from the scabbard was a slender, sharp, long sword.

It had no edge. Only a pitch black blade that was forged for thrusting purposes. A crescent shaped simple bell-guard decorated it.

That resembled a weapon that was called epee rapier used in fencing.

But it was different from an epee.

It was also different from a rapier.

No, in the first place, that sword was not even made to be used against humans.

"....."

Gekkou swung that sword.

Gekkou flung the sword that had no blade, forged to be used for thrusting.

But despite the fact that it should have no blade, that pitch black blade severed the snake's head. The snake's head was sliced off readily and sent flying into the air. The head of the snake that was sent flying into the air after getting sliced off screamed.

<< Gigigigigiggagagagagagagugaagagagagagga >>

The snake gave out an ear-piercing scream in displeasure. The being that did not seem to be from this world gave out a meaningless scream.

With a voice that would seem to break anyone who's listening to it.

With a voice that would seem to drive anyone who's listening to it into terror, causing him to go mad, and breaking him.

"....."

No, the truth was that voice did carry such a curse.

Listening to that.

Listening to that curse-ridden howl, Gekkou said.

"Noisy."

And then,

"Exorcise, Spell Error **Wicked Blade**"

He severed that howl from the snake.

Immediately, the howl stopped. That curse-ridden howl that was reverberating in the classroom stopped.

As if it were astonished, the snake's eyes widened, but Gekkou, with a bored face, said,

"This is what happens to a howling small fry."

After saying that, he thrust his sword towards the widened, astonished eyes of the snake. And pinned it to the ground.

Then,

"..... erase this fella's existence, Spell Error **Wicked Blade**."

He commanded the sword.

As he did that, the pitch black blade of the sword seemed to become even darker and deeper. The darkness of the sword started devouring the snake. The curse of the sword started devouring the snake. The curse which was darker than the black snake shadow started ravishing the snake.

As that happened, the snake seemed about to scream from the excruciating pain, but its voice was devoured by the sword. It seemed about to shriek in agony, but its voice was devoured by the sword. And before long, not only the voice of the snake, but the life of the snake was sucked away and extinguished by the sword.

Not a trace was left.

Not a trace of its existence was left.

After ascertaining that, Gekkou once again turned his sight towards the blackboard. He turned his sight to the main body of the snake.

The shadow had moved from the blackboard, and was slithering into a nook in the ceiling, and Gekkou looked up at it,

"..... the last time when I killed a Geinvikku, everything was settled from just destroying the head but..... somehow, it seems like you're still alive."

At his query, a large eye-like thing appeared in the center of that shadow. That eye looked at him. In the center of that eye was a red spiral. That spiral spun. Spinning,

spinning, spinning in a swirling manner. Spinning in a swirling manner, unleashing a curse to guide the consciousness of its opponent into committing suicide --- but yet, Gekkou began,

"So?"

He said.

And once again, the eye of the shadow unleashing the curse widened in surprise. Indifferent to the widened astonished eye, Gekkou said again,

"So?"

"If you have infiltrated my school with just that level of magic, then it's about time to kill you..... ok?"

He swung his sword. And put his strength into his sword arm.

As he did that,

"Oops, wait a bit, don't start getting too excited, Gekkou-chan."

An unpleasant, high-pitched voice rang out from the shadow. From the ceiling of the room, the shadow that was coiled up like a snake spoke.

Gekkou-chan.

Gekkou-chan.

On hearing those words,

"..... how did you know my name?"

Gekkou asked.

And the shadow said.

"How, how, how, I wonder ~?"

Gekkou lowered his sword. And glowered at the shadow.

"..... hmm. The Geinvikku I killed last time did not understand human speech. In other words, you are not a Geinvikku?"

On hearing that, with a laughing voice, the shadow said,

"Even though you already knew knew knew ittt."

Gekkou then nodded.

Indeed, he had realized quite a while ago that this fella was not just any Geinvikku. No, in the first place, a Geinvikku would not devour such a large number of humans.

On top of that, the Head Pastors of Italy **C h u r c h** recently, with a 'restriction' law of their own, would mete out a tough punishment to Geinvikku caught devouring humans.

And because of that, the number of incidents of Geinvikku devouring humans had decreased greatly. At any rate, a Geinvikku can survive without devouring any

humans. That's why, there were few that would run the risk of a heavy punishment just to indulge themselves in a meal which they are overly fond of.

In other words.

Gekkou looked intently at the snake before him and said.

"..... you're controlling a Geinvikku?"

"Well well."

"What are you?"

"Well well"

"How did you know my name?"

"Well well well well."

"No matter. If you're not going to answer, I shall ask your body."

On saying that, Gekkou adopted a stance. He lowered his body. Gathered his strength, intending to leap.

At that moment.

"Well wait a minute ~. If you want to know my true form that much, I'll tell it to you."

On saying that, the head of a snake once again appeared from the shadow. And the snake opened its mouth wide. From that mouth, in an upside-down fashion, the face of a human came out.

"....."

No, whether to call that a human or not remained a question. Dropping from the head of a snake, filled with curled up silver hair, and with silver slit-shaped eyes resembling that of a cat. And a large, seemingly split open mouth that appeared to be scoffing at him.

Clearly, he was no human, but even with half of the blood he carried coming from a monster, there was a visible resemblance to that of a human male. There was a visible resemblance to a frivolous male in his early twenties.

He knew of a number of monster species that could take on the appearance of a human, but if it's a half-devil kin, having its blood thinned makes it less of an opponent.

Even if it's a goblin, it's not much of an opponent as well.

He had also fought off a mad fairy before, well, something like that could be managed as well.

But, if that fella was a demon.

"....."

A demon who could take on the form of a human and understand human speech would be a troublesome opponent beyond his experience.

Gekkou looked up at that silver-haired man who clearly did not resemble a human being and said.

"A half-devil kin?"

"Hehehe."

"Or a goblin?"

"Hohoho."

"..... damn. As I thought, a demon huh..... then, I can't go easy on you."

The silver-haired demon then said.

"Eh-heh ~. A mere human, a mere h-u-m-a-n can't go easy on me? Aha-ha. Laughable. To spit out such nonsense, you make me want to kill you....."

"Shut up, small fry."

As he said that, he made a powerful leap. And thrust his sword forward.

"Restrain this fella, Spell....."

But, at that moment,

"That again? Does your power come from that sword alone? As I thought, my expectations in you were misplaced."

The silver-haired demon stuck out his tongue.

Like a snake's tongue, it extended out from its mouth to his chest. Carved into the center of that tongue, was a pattern of three overlapping 'X' marks inscribed in a circle. That pattern glowed red. Following that, a powerful, shockwave-like force was unleashed towards Gekkou.

Looking at that,

"..... tch."

Gekkou uttered softly and changed his stance. Following that, in his mind, he changed the structure of the command incantation to his sword.

"Exorcise, Spell Error **Wicked Blade**"

He swung his sword, attempting to sever the shockwave.

However.

"..... huh?"

The sword was pushed back by the red light. The body of Gekkou in mid-leap crashed into a desk in the classroom. The legs of that desk bent. Causing it to sink to the ground. However, the impact from the shockwave unleashed by the silver-haired demon had not yet ended.

Gekkou's landed on the ground on his knees. And his knees sank into the ground.

Even as Gekkou desperately tried to resist the shockwave, he could not push it back.

"..... what the hell is this?"

He said in a pained tone.

"Hey, Spell Error **Wicked Blade**, what are you doing? With just this level of demonic power, hurry up and exorcise it."

He said to the sword.

However, the sword could do nothing to dispel the shockwave unleashed by the enemy. Gradually, gradually, Gekkou's body got pressed downwards.

"Guu....."

He groaned.

Seeing how his knees were sinking into the ground steadily, he scowled.

His face contorted at the realization that the power of his sword was gradually diminishing.

However.

"....."

However, that shouldn't have been possible.

The Spell Error **Wicked Blade** that he was wielding should possess the power to exorcise all forms of demonic power.

It was a sword that held the vast power to seal any demon power, no, even a god's power as well --- that was what the previous owner of the sword, a shady priest who lived on a mountaintop in the Principality of Andorra, a remote place in Europe, had said.

In truth, whatever monster he fought with, the sword invoked its power. As long as he wielded this sword, he could suppress the power of any monster.

That's why Gekkou had chosen this sword as his weapon.

He had chosen this sword in order to defeat his little brother, who could command the power of demons.

And then, just a week ago.

Gekkou had used this sword to suppress a demon, and on top of that used it to kill his little brother.

However, right now, the sword was not reacting to the attacks from the demon right before him.

No, rather, the sword was slowly losing its powers.

"..... what on earth had happened?"

He muttered.

He looked intently at the grinning demon on the ceiling, and then glowered at the sword he was holding,

"..... this damn useless sword! Why can't you release your power!?"

Gekkou yelled.

However, as expected, no power burst forth from the sword.

Gradually, gradually, the red light unleashed by the silver-haired demon was pressing against Gekkou body, threatening to crush him.

"Damn."

He said.

As he was cussing, a certain conversation he had had surfaced in his mind.

He remembered the words of the alcoholic Father during the time when he had received the sword from him.

No, that Father had always been drinking and his words were in one or another nonsensical, but, he seemed to have mentioned that there was one single monster which the sword would have no effect on, or maybe he didn't, Gekkou thought.

It was a monster which was worse than a demon.

It was a monster which was worse than a god.

"....."

At that juncture, Gekkou squinted his eyes. He looked intently at the oppressing force of the light unleashed by the silver-haired demon.

And he looked in the direction of the monster which the Spell Error **Wicked Blade**, a sword which should have been able to exorcise all forms of demonic entities, had no effect on,

"..... hm. In other words, this fella is not a demon?"

He murmured softly, and his right hand left the sword and reached out into the back pocket of his pants. He took out a pass case and opened it. With a single hand, from the inside of his pass case, he put away his commuter pass, he put away his student pass, and from its deeper recesses, with his fingertip, he pulled out a small piece of paper and grasped it with his fist.

He grasped it tightly.

He grasped it so tightly that his fingernails bit into the flesh of his palm, so tightly that blood was flowing out.

And that blood.

"....."

That blood stained the paper he was grasping red.

Instantly --- Gekkou could feel an immense amount of power squirming within his clenched fist, but without revealing any sign of that on his face,

"Hey, that smirking silver hair fella."

Said Gekkou.

On hearing that, the silver-haired demon looked down on him,

"What what wh~at?"

"Listen to me."

"That's why I asked 'what'?"

Replying to his query, Gekkou said.

"..... just now, you mentioned that your expectations in me were misplaced?"

On hearing that, the silver-haired demon nodded readily,

"That's because you are weak....."

But, before he could finish his sentence, Gekkou starting flinging his fist forward.

"Who the hell is the small fry addressing that to!"

As he yelled, he started flinging his fist --- no, to be precise, he started flinging his right fist that was grasping onto a blood-stained piece of paper forward.

By the way, to talk about the origins of that piece of paper --- it was a piece of boar skin from about a hundred and eighty years ago, a relatively quiet era of Japan, during which there was a widespread practice adopted from a portion of the religious scriptures among clans, where in that practice, a boar would be made to eat the carrion of a baby, and that boar would be offered to the Oni, after which spell verses would be inscribed onto the boar skin that had been 'blessed' by the Oni --- and that was the nature of it.

Well, he didn't really know the truth behind it. Even though he had been told that it was a piece of boar skin on which spell verses were written, it was clearly merely a piece of old paper, so anyhow, he didn't really know the truth behind it.

However, even though he didn't know the true origins of the paper, it indeed had the power.

It had the power to confer a deep, deep, deep curse on his opponent.

In the instant.

When Gekkou threw the paper towards his enemy ---

".....that's correct."

The silver-haired demon said.

With a slushing sound, he pulled out his arm from the mouth of the Geinvikku**S n a k e** . And stretched out his arm in a swift motion. And then caught hold of the piece of paper that Gekkou had thrown with that right hand.

"That is King Enn's[2] talisman right? Terrible terrible. That's kind of terrible. Even though Spell Error **Wicked Blade** won't work on me, but if it's a talisman local to Japan, it might just damage my pretty face ~"

Even as he said that, the silver-haired demon's grin became broader. In the same way as his arm, he stretched his head out further. His grinning face came close to his ears,

"But well..... I won't let you use it though....."

He whispered.

"Now is this it? Is this all there is to Gekkou-chan's power?"

On hearing that.

Gekkou turned his sight towards the silver-haired demon. With hateful eyes, he glared at the monster,

"..... I'm gonna kill you."

"Ah-haha."

"I'm serious. I'll definitely kill you."

"Ah-hahahaha. How? Your sword is useless. And you can't use your talismans. So how would you be able to....."

At that moment, Gekkou spat.

He spat at the face of the silver-haired demon.

The spat landed on the demon's forehead. In response to that, the demon's slit-shaped eyes narrowed.

And then.

"Ahh....."

He said.

He said softly, as if he were sighing.

And with his narrowed eyes, he looked intently at Gekkou.

"..... ahhh, don't mess with me you know. If it weren't for his orders..... if it weren't for his orders, I'd have..... I'd have....."

On hearing those words, Gekkou looked intently at the demon,

"You'd have killed me?"

"That's right."

"Hmph. You won't be able to."

"Ahhh? You can still say that even in this situation?"

"It's a fact. I haven't gotten serious yet."

"Ah-hahahahahahaha."

The demon laughed mockingly.

But Gekkou laughed back as well.

"Hahahaha. Do you want to try it?"

"Ah-hahahahahahaha."

"But you can't try it right? You just said orders. In order words, you have been ordered not to kill me. That's why you can't kill me. The reason being you are someone else's slave. As a slave, you'd do well to just shut your mouth."

On hearing those words, the silver-haired demon went on to laugh madly.

"Ah-hahahahahahahahahahahahahahahahahahahaha, haha, haa~a, this is indeed terrible. I was really on the verge of breaking my contract and killing this fella. So please don't talk too much..... if this goes on, my hand might just slip and end up killing you....."

But, Gekkou returned,

"The one who should shut up is you, lowly slave. Now, stop this meaningless farce."

"Lowly..... lowly slave? Who are you calling that?"

"You."

"Hahahahahaha."

"Now, it's about time you get to the main point. Who's the one you are serving, and what have you come here for? How did you know my name?"

"....."

The silver-haired demon did not reply. He kept silent, appearing to be considering something. No, it was easy to guess what the demon was thinking.

*Maybe I should just kill this guy?*

*Or should I abide by my contract?*

He was probably pondering back and forth between these two thoughts. Gekkou then turned his sight away from the demon, towards another direction.

First, outside the window of the classroom.

Even though he had yet to call her, a subordinate of his was currently deployed outside the window. If he called, she would come flying in, and attack the demon, but, the time was not ripe yet.

Following that he strained his ears towards the audible footsteps coming from behind him.

As expected, outside of the classroom. From the end of the corridor, he could hear two people dashing up the stairs.

It was probably the useless idiot and Saitohimea. It would be ten seconds before they reach here.

In other words, he just needed to hold off this monster for ten seconds, after which he would once again regain his advantage.

Once he regained his advantage, the four of them would be able to surround this fella and beat him to half-death and restrain him.

If that happens, the situation would be completely reversed.

While he didn't know who this fella was working for and for what purpose he had come, but once they restrained him, he would be able to slowly interrogate him, and obtain the truth from his body.

That's why he could not afford to let this fella escape now.

He could not let this silver-haired demon bid him farewell and leave, having believed that he had already won and had been rambling about how good it felt.

There was a need to pin his head to the ground and rub his head across the ground until he cries and goes *I've already told you everything! There's no longer anything else I'm hiding! Save meeeeeeeeee*, and carry on further to interrogate him for another ten hours.

That's why,

"Now, hurry up and talk. What on earth does a third rate idiot with an errand boy face want with me?"

"....."

"Why're you keeping quiet now? After getting spat on your face, you're too pissed for words?"

"....."

However, all of a sudden,

"Ki~dding~"

The silver-haired demon said.

And grinned broadly. Widening his mouth, he grinned broadly. His mouth went on to open even wider. From the gap of that mouth, his long tongue rolled out again. With that tongue, he licked the spit from Gekkou off his forehead.

"..... I wasn't really pissed at anything. I was wondering what kind of tactics you would employ against someone you definitely can't beat..... hmpf hmpf, you're doing surprisingly well, I'm a little impressed....."

As he said that, he launched the tongue that he had used to lick off Gekkou's spit towards the right. *Swoosh*, with the sound something slicing through the air, his tongue extended in a swift motion.

The outstretched tongue ripped the curtain to shreds, then further went on to smash a hole through the window beyond the curtain, and then further went on to thrust at Gekkou's subordinate who was lying in wait beyond the window,

"Mirai!? Get down!!"

Gekkou hollered.

And outside the window.

A lethargic looking high school student who was sitting idly on the railing portion of the veranda looked in at them.

Andou Mirai --- that was the name of that short girl.

With slightly childish features, calm eyes, and a long ponytail.

Despite her thirteen to fourteen year old appearance, for some reason, she was wearing a Miyasaka High sailor uniform and had a student council executive member armband attached; that girl looked up at the window glass that was abruptly split apart,

"Hweh?"

She uttered.

At the very same time she uttered that, the thrusting tongue of the silver-haired demon reached the top of the ribbon on her sailor uniform,

"Uwah uwah, what's this!"

Yelled Mirai as she jumped frantically with a reaction speed that was unthinkable for a human.

She barely dodged the tongue.

While it was great that she managed to dodge the tongue, as a result of jumping off the railing, her body floated in mid-air for an instant,

"Ah-rya....."

*Oh no!*, she said as she looked down, and following that she looked up at them again.

And then,

"Crap, Gekkou, I'm falling....."

But her words ended there.

Mirai started falling, and of course on top of that, as a result of her falling momentum, her skirt caught the wind and was flung upwards, exposing her panties on which an anime character was printed,

"Hey kyaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa, Gekkou, I'll kill you if you look! I'll definitely kill you if you look, get ittttttttttttttttttttttttttttttttttttttt....."

As she hollered noisily, Mirai disappeared from the veranda.

By the way, the classroom that Gekkou and Mirai were in was on the fourth floor of the building.

If a person fell from that height, it could turn into a serious affair, however, since she was no human, there wasn't a problem.

Looking in the direction where Mirai was, Gekkou sighed a soft sigh of relief and murmured,

"..... that useless fool."

However, for some reason, the silver-haired demon looked down at him,

"Heh..... hehheh~, you felt relief seeing others get saved. That's interesting too. Quite a different personality from what I've imagined....."

On hearing that, Gekkou turned towards the silver-haired demon who still had his tongue extended out.

No, while he kept thinking of him as a demon all this while, it was highly probable that he was no demon, but some other monster; and looking at that monster,

"..... fool. I'm a genius beyond the imaginable capabilities of a third rate monster."

"Ah-hahahaha."

"Laugh while you ca....."

But at that moment, that silver-haired monster pulled out his other arm. And with that hand, he shut Gekkou's mouth,

"Well, time to shut up, brat."

He said.

With tremendous amount of pressure, he shut Gekkou's mouth.

However, in response to that.

Gekkou laughed.

"..... fugaga, fugafufufu."

Having his mouth gagged up, the words couldn't come out properly for now, but what Gekkou said was, *I'm waiting for this*.

And then, *snap*, he closed his jaws. As he did that, a capsule which was lodged in his rear teeth was dislodged. He crushed that capsule with his teeth. A bitter fluid flowed out of that capsule, and transformed into something that resembled a small dog with sunken eyes. From the face of that dog, a snout flew out and bit into the hand of the silver-haired monster. And from its teeth, a curse flowed into the enemy.....

"As I was saying, you should just keep your mouth shut."

Said the silver-haired monster unexpectedly. Then, the monster's eyes glowed red. And the spell Gekkou had invoked was readily dispelled.

The relatively high level spell created by the Inugami believers was readily dispelled.

With a smile,

"..... now now, it seems like two more of your friends are heading towards here, though if it's possible, I would prefer to talk to you alone, so let me just quickly finish this talk."

He said.

However, as Gekkou's mouth was being pressed, he could not answer.

After ascertaining that, the silver-haired monster started talking.

"Well, you should already know this, but the reason I came here was to meet you."

As he spoke, Gekkou started thinking of his next hand. Since Mirai had fallen to the ground level, it would probably take her some time to come back up again. He could no longer depend on Mirai's power.

"The mission I was given is to first ascertain your strength, get a grasp of your personality, and then investigate the mechanism of this place where the school called the **Holy Ground** is located."

As he spoke, Gekkou considered his next hand.

Taito and Saitohimea would probably be here any minute, and it would be terrible if this fella disappeared before that. There was a need to properly grill him for the necessary information.

"..... and well, to deal with you and the, what's that again? The **<< Military >>**? With our strength, it's easy to take care of you guys."

As he spoke, Gekkou considered his next hand.

That's why there was a need to think of a way to restrain him here. Now, what should he do? How could they restrain this monster?

After considering for a while, he took off his right leather shoe. At the sole of the shoe was a needle.....

But, at that moment.

"..... so what's left is to pass you the warning message from my master, thereafter my mission would be completed. So I'll tell it to you now."

As he spoke, Gekkou considered his next hand ---

Rather, as he was about to consider his next hand,

"I shall repeat what Hinata said."

At that moment,

"....."

Gekkou's thoughts halted.

His eyes widened. And he looked at the face of the silver-haired monster.

*What did you just say?*, he wanted to ask, however, as his mouth was being covered, he could not do so.

The silver-haired monster continued nonchalantly.

"This was what Hinata had said. *It's better to give up on keeping Saitohimea, big brother. If I were to tell the foolish you that you won't be able to manage that mad witch..... you probably won't listen to me, that's why, in the event that you intend to keep that woman, not knowing your place, I have to warn you about one thing. Just beware of the encroachment from the* ***Moon*** *.....*, and that's what he said."

After saying that, the monster removed his hand from Gekkou's mouth.

"All right, my job is done~"

However, Gekkou caught hold of the silver hair of that monster,

"Hey, what did you just say? Hinata..... Hinata told you that?"

On hearing that, while still having his hair grabbed, the silver-haired monster looked at him,

"Even though I'm not obliged to answer you..... that's right."

"By Hinata, you mean Kurenai Hinata?"

Readily,

"Right."

Said the monster.

"Your twin little brother. Even though you are both the same, your personality and powers differ greatly....."

But, at that moment,

"Don't shit with me!"

Yelled Gekkou as he swung his sword. Facing the silver-haired monster, he swung his sword. The sword struck the cheek of the monster. With a force that can split his head into two, the sword struck his cheek. However, the sword did not make a single scratch on the monster's skin.

However, Gekkou could not stop the flow of his words. Glaring at the monster,

"I used this sword to kill my little brother.... Hinata."

"Being able to make you think that, that's how different the levels are....."

"Shut up!"

Gekkou grabbed the needle from the sole of his shoe. And flung it. With a brief glitter, the needle was sent flying towards the monster,

"Ah-hahaha, you're angry. You're angry. You're angry because I hit the mark ~"

The monster readily grabbed it with its tongue.

Gekkou looked at that. He looked at that with a glowering glare. With his pitch black eyes embedded with hatred, he looked at that.

"....."

And then, he thought.

*That can't be possible*, Gekkou thought.

The reason was because, just a week ago, he had killed little brother with his own hand.

Nine years ago, right before his eyes, his parents got devoured,

*"I shall let you, my big brother, to live for another nine years. After nine years, you will be devoured by a demon though....."*

He disappeared after saying that, and when he returned, Gekkou would have made him say, *"I really can't match up to big brother's genius"*; that should have been the case.

"....."

He recalled the events that happened a week ago.

The Hinata who had come after Himea was more of a monster than he thought, and it took the four of them, Taito, Saitohimea, Mirai, and Gekkou himself, to successfully defeat him.

It pissed him to admit this, but Hinata did possess a much larger power than Gekkou. A power so immense that it was beyond Gekkou's reach. For nine whole years, in order not to be killed by his little brother who would appear before him someday, he had worked crazily hard to the point of death at times, but yet, it was not enough to match up to Hinata.

"....."

However, there was no mistake that he had killed him.

He should have snuffed out the life of his little brother with this Spell Error **Wicked Blade**.

Gekkou looked at the silver-haired monster.

And asked.

"..... so you are serving Hinata?"

"That's right."

"Hinata is still alive now?"

"If he were dead, I wouldn't have taken the trouble to come here to meet a human being of your level."

On hearing that reply, a small smile surfaced on Gekkou's lips.

And then,

"..... that's right, isn't it?"

He said.

Currently, Gekkou was not confident of defeating this monster in a one on one fight. That's how powerful this monster was.

But yet, Hinata had been able to make this powerful monster his servant. That just meant he possessed the power to make this monster his servant.

If that's the case.

If he possessed such great power, Hinata probably wouldn't personally bother with Gekkou.

*In other words*, Gekkou thought.

"....."

*In other words, I'm not even worth the trouble for him to come meet personally*.

He was giving him a warning because they were brothers, but it's not worth the trouble for him to do so personally. That's what it meant.

Gekkou asked.

"..... then what was that thing which I've killed?"

But, the silver-haired monster replied,

"I wonder ~. I wasn't summoned then."

"So, are you the strongest monster in Hinata's employment?"

"I wonder ~. I'm not really interested in that sort of thing."

"Haha. You possess such great strength, but yet you have no interest in power?"

"Not at all~"

"I see."

After saying that, Gekkou withdrew his sword from the cheek of the monster. And sheathed it back into the scabbard."

And he thought.

*--- the only one who's interested in power is a small fry crawling on the ground, a small fry like me?*

He thought.

"..... don't get vexxed."

"With what?"

"....."

But Gekkou did not reply.

At that moment, he felt a presence from behind him.

"Uwehh ~ what's this thing?"

A voice rang out.

He turned around to see a guy and a girl.

Kurogane Taito and Saitohimea.

Looking at them,

"The small fries are too slow."

On hearing that, Taito replied.

"Well, we were intercepted by the teacher....."

"Don't give excuses, trash."

"Hey you, we came all the way here to help you, and you're giving us this..... ahh damn, well, well, seeing the circumstances as they are, I'll forget that for now."

While saying that, he entered the classroom.

"So, what's the situation?"

He said.

Once again, Gekkou turned his sight towards the silver-haired monster.

However, the silver-haired monster was no longer there. He probably retreated back into the shadow of the Geinvikku, and there was nothing else except the snake monster in the classroom.

Gekkou then started,

"..... since your arrival is even much slower than the brains of the famous idiot Kurogane Taito, I've already put an end to it."

"Just you wait, I'll really kill you!"

As Taito retorted, Gekkou no longer felt like fooling around anymore.

He took a small breath. And looked up at the Geinvikku,

"So, what are you going to do now? If you've done everything you came to do, you will go back right?"

"Yeah."

A voice answered from inside of the Geinvikku. Gekkou then nodded,

"Can I have the students back? Or have you already devoured them?"

"I'll never eat a lowly human."

"Then why did you abduct them?"

"For research ~. To find out the insides of the things within the << **Holy Ground** >>."

"And?"

"I've already collected enough data to satisfy my master."

"Then return them."

"I'm going to."

After saying that, the Geinvikku opened its mouth wide. And with that, it turned to face them and came attacking,

"Woah, it's not ended at all!"

Taito yelled.

But, ignoring that, Gekkou once again drew the sword at his waist. And beheaded the Geinvikku which had come attacking. As he did that,

<< Gigigigigiggagagagagugaagagagagaga >>

The Geinvikku's head screamed again. The sword pierced through that head. And pinned it to the floor. And then Gekkou murmured softly.

"..... erase the existence of this fella, Spell Error **Wicked Blade**."

He commanded the sword.

This time for certain, all traces of the Geinvikku's life vanished.

At the same time, the shadow at the corner of the ceiling could no longer hold its form, and a person, and another person, students wearing the uniforms of Miyasaka High came tumbling out.

A male student covered in digestive juices fell onto the floor, and from above him came a girl with short hair. Followed by a long black hair girl.

And from above her, came a big guy who seemed about 130 kilos.....

"Wait, that looks baddddddddddd!"

Taito yelled.

And he ran. To catch the falling big guy. On catching hold of that heavy weight, a cracking sound could be heard at his hip,

"Gugyaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa!?"

While he shouted, he somehow managed to drop that guy to the side.

But there were more students falling out,

"Shit. This is terrible. Gekkou, lend me a hand....."

But, instead,

"Hm. You did well. This is the first time in your whole life that you've proven to be of any use in this world. Continue catching the students' falls in that manner."

"No way!"

"Then die."

"Damn youuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuu, wait, please wait! It's fine to fall on me, but please slow down the rate!"

While saying that, Taito frantically moved to stop the students' falls.

After watching for a while,

"All done?"

Gekkou asked.

But no reply came.

Instead, a query came from behind,

"..... what kind of monster was that?"

Asked Saitohimea.

Gekkou turned around. An unbelievably beautiful girl was standing there in the dark classroom.

With lavender colored long hair and deep crimson lips.

A girl possessing an unearthly beauty, wearing a red pleated skirt and sailor uniform, assuming the manner of a human.

Looking at her figure, Gekkou recalled the words said by the silver-haired monster a while ago.

The warning from his irritating little brother.

Hinata had said this.

*"It's better to give up on keeping Saitohimea, big brother. If I were to tell the foolish you that you won't be able to manage that mad witch..... you probably won't listen to me, that's why, in the event that you intend to keep that woman, not knowing your place, I have to warn you about one thing. Just beware of the encroachment from the* ***Moon*** *....."*

Gekkou squinted his eyes.

Mad witch.

Encroachment from the **Moon**.

As the two sentences floated in his mind, *again*, he thought. Hinata had once again said something which he did not comprehend.

Gekkou frowned and then looked at Himea's face, which was so well formed that it felt unpleasant to him.

He looked at the face of the woman whom his little brother had called a mad witch.

And he answered her question.

*What kind of monster was that?*, that was the question he was answering to.

"..... a Geinvikku."

But, Himea looked intently at him,

"Liar. G e i n v i k k u **Moth's Great Snake** can't speak human language."

"Then that fella was a academic type perhaps."

"Ahaha, that wasn't funny at all."

A bewitching smile floated on her face. She nodded. Following that, she turned and looked around her.

The crushed desk.

The empty hole on the wall.

*Something. Something irregular must have happened here, didn't it?* With that kind of perplexed expression as she looked for traces of what could have transpired here, looking around her; but in the midst of it, her eyes fell on Taito who was frantically stopping the fall of students, and her face relaxed,

"I'll also help, Taito ~ <3"

On saying that, she dashed to his side. And hugged Taito. Even as Taito exclaimed *Uwah Himea, you're in the way*, or *Idiot*, she just smiled happily.

Looking intently at the two idiots,

"Are you guys morons?"

Muttered Gekkou softly.

"..... is that the mad witch whom I'm supposed to have trouble dealing with?"

It seemed like a joke.

He thought. And after gazing at the pair fooling around for a while,

"..... hm."

Once again, he took out his cellphone from his pocket. He searched for the **Military** entry in his contact list and pressed a button. After ringing twice, a woman's voice greeted him.

*"Yes."*

"I've dealt with the monster."

*"Yes."*

"It's already too late to lift the school closure order for today."

*"Yes."*

"Anyway, erase the memories of the students for now and send them back home. And a battle took place on the fourth floor of the west premises of the school. Get someone to make repairs."

*"..... were all the abducted students retrieved?"*

"I wonder. A few of them might have gotten digested, but that's not my job to know."

*"..... how can you say that? You will get called for an inquiry again, you know?"*

"As if I care."

*"But....."*

But, at that moment, Gekkou closed his phone. Following that, once again, he looked intently at the Himea who was happily helping Taito.

**<<** V a m p i r e **Most Ancient Sorcerer >>** Saitohimea.

The former lover of Bahlskra, the witch who had created an incomprehensible magic known as **<< Bliss >>** which was capable of both throwing the world into chaos as well as guiding it.

The mad witch who had sealed the demon god who was feared by the organizations of the world, Bahlskra.

After looking intently at her beautiful figure for a while, at the one who holds multiple weighty names and titles but yet could laugh happily when she was beside the Kurogane Taito who clearly possessed a level of intelligence below that of a middle school student,

"..... beware of the encroachment from the **Moon**..... huh. Seems like some research is needed."

Gekkou said. Following that, he pulled his sword out from the floor and sheathed it back into its scabbard. Then turned on his heel and left the classroom.

"....."

And once again, he walked along the corridor, back to the student council room.

# The Moon Rises

The sky was strangely dark.

Even though it was not raining, the thick clouds blocked out the sunlight, and consequently, it was as if a huge shadow eclipsed the entire town.

It was only a little past two in the afternoon, but yet, it was dark enough for one to mistake it for evening.

"..... the weather up till noon was good though."

Said Taito as he looked up at the sky.

He was at the rooftop of the school, where it was normally out of bounds to the students.

After some time had passed since the earlier events, a little while after Taito was done with catching the falling students that were devoured by the Gein-something monster, the reinforcements from the **Military** came and he left the work of helping the students and repairing of the classroom to them, then he went on to change out of his clothes that were stained with the digestive juices of the monster, and right now, finally, he could eat his lunch at the out-of-bounds rooftop.

Well, rather, since he would get in the way of the << **Military** >> as they did their cleanup, he was told to go to the rooftop in the meantime, until everything was finished.

And so, on the rooftop, he ate the bento he received from Haruka, and on top of that, the croquette bread he got from Himea as well, and ended up so stuffed that he felt like puking, and as a result, he lay down on the ground, and was now looking up at the sky.

He looked up at the dark sky which, before he knew it, had been completely covered by the clouds,

"Seems like it's going to rain."

He murmured.

Himea, who was sitting beside him, also looked up at the sky,

"I wonder."

She said.

Taito then looked at Himea. Taito looked at the Himea, who was sitting in a girl-like fashion beside him.

And then, 'h~m', he seemed about to groan out.

Unexpectedly, they were driven to the rooftop by the orders of the **<< Military >>**, but, under normal circumstances, this would have been equivalent to skipping the fifth period, sneaking onto the school's rooftop which was out of bounds to the students, and having his lunch late, together with an unbelievably beautiful girl in a sailor uniform --- a situation like that would,

".....seem a little naughty, I guess."

Murmured Taito out loud.

Himea then looked at him,

"Ahaha. Taito has always been naughty since young."

She laughed happily.

Looking intently at that smiling face,

"How was I a naughty kid?"

"You peed on the slide in the park. A naughty kid indeed ~!"

"When was that?"

"Nine years ago."

"I was seven then."

"Yeah."

"It was normal for that age right?"

On hearing his words,

"Heehh, I didn't know that. Do all humans do that?"

For some reason, she had an admiring look on her face,

"..... ahrmm, no, I was kidding, you know? Normally, one wouldn't pee on the slide..... ah ~, wait, let's stop this talk after all. The topic is a little....."

The topic is a little too filthy, Taito wanted to say, but just the thought of it made him shut his mouth.

Himea continued,

"There're even more, there're even more instances when you were being naughty."

"Ehhhh, we're still on that subject?"

"Of course! Another instance when you were being naughty, is like the instance when you ate the bento from the girl you were fooling around with right ~?"

As she said that, she looked at the finished bento he had gotten from Haruka.

On hearing that, Taito felt like crying,

"No, I mean, as I have been saying, I'm not fooling with her....."

But he was interrupted by Himea,

"There're still others you know, like forgetting about me and casting me aside for a long, long time right?"

She said.

On hearing that again,

"....."

Taito had nothing to say to that.

With regards to that matter, there was nothing he could say to defend himself.

Even though he had made a promise with her to be together, he had instead forgotten about her and had been leading a carefree life for the past nine years.

During that time.

During that long nine years, she had endured that darkness alone. While fighting against despair, she had to endure that loneliness. While Taito was leading a carefree life, she was all alone, living a life which was worse than death.

That was the worst, he thought.

*I am really the worst*, he thought from the bottom of his heart.

In fact, he would really be fine with her cursing him and killing him to get back at him for his betrayal, but ---

"....."

Taito looked at the girl who should really be hating him.

He looked at the Himea who was calling him naughty, naughty, over and over again.

Right before him, was a girl who, even as she was complaining about him, was gazing back at him with a very joyful, and affectionate face,

"But, now that we're together, I'm really happy you know?"

She said.

For a high school freshman brat, he was at a complete loss of words in response to the straight ball she threw.

And with that, she classically leaned her head against Taito's chest.

"Ah, I can hear the sound of Taito's beating heart."

She said.

And he felt like he had those words before, a long time ago. That was during the time when they made a mound in the sandpit, which they then used as a pillow for lying down. Himea, who was lying beside him came to lean her head against his chest, and together, they counted the heartbeats as time passed --- however, while it was forgivable because he was seven years old then, but now, ermm, about this,

"......Himea?"

"Hn~?"

"Erm, you're a little heavy."

"It'll be ok <3."

"Ehhhh~?"

"Bear with it."

"Ehhhh ~"

At that moment, he could feel his heart beating a little faster from the embarrassing situation. Feeling embarrassed at having his heartbeat heard, Taito tried his best to change the topic. It would be kind of bad if this carried on. If this event above the school's rooftop unfolded in the same way as those hardcore shoujo manga, it will definitely become disastrous, Taito thought.

That's why he needed to change to some other appropriate topic, but what? As he was considering what subject he should talk about, what came to his mind was ---

*How about the weather?*

"Wait, am I a moron?"

He retorted to himself.

And once again, in order to take his mind off the thought of her small head leaning against his chest, he averted his gaze and looked up at the sky.

He looked up at the dark sky that was covered with thick clouds.

And he could see a glimmer of light from a small thin gap between the clouds.

He could see a round, faint, moon-like shape between the clouds.

"Huh?"

Uttered Taito.

On hearing that,

"What's wrong?"

Himea asked.

"Well no, even though it's still afternoon and the sky's full of clouds, I can see....."

Just as he was about to finish his reply, the moon immediately got obscured by the cruising clouds. Just as he was about to switch to an interesting topic, the clouds promptly covered the subject of that topic,

"..... ahh, well, forget it. It's nothing."

Said Taito.

Himea looked up at him,

"Eh ~. What is it, what is it? Are you hiding something from me ~?"

She said with reproachful eyes.

While still lying on the ground, Taito shrugged his shoulders,

"No, I'm not hiding anything from you....."

"Then, what is it?"

"But, it's no longer visible."

"What's 'it'?"

"Well, the moon."

Said Taito.

On hearing that, Himea turned around.

And looked up at the sky.

"..... moon?"

"Yeah."

"I don't see it."

"Yeah. It's already hidden by the clouds."

After saying that, Taito looked up at the sky once more. He squinted his eyes at the clouds, in the direction where he saw the moon earlier. And he tried visualizing the moon which he saw earlier among the clouds.

It was a round moon with a slight reddish color.

That's right.

The moon which he saw just now was strangely reddish in color. That was why he let out an utterance of slight surprise. Even though there were occasions when he had seen the moon in the sky while it was still bright before, he had never see one that was reddish in color, that was why he was somewhat surprised.

"I wonder..... whether it's possible to see a red moon during daytime."

Murmured Taito softly.

On hearing that,

"..... red?"

Himea asked, and all of a sudden, she got up on her feet. As she did that, a gust of wind caused her skirt to flutter about. With her skirt fluttering, she walked all the way to the mesh fence of the rooftop and looked up at the sky. She clutched the mesh with her hands, and stretched her body upwards, looking up at the sky, desperately searching for something.

Taito smiled wryly at that,

"Hey, do you really want to see it that much?"

He asked.

"....."

For some reason, she stayed silent for an instant, then turned back. And flashed a smile.

"Yeah ~. I guess so."

She said, and laughed out loud. For some reason, she laughed out loud with a sad looking face.

On seeing that,

"What's wrong?"

Taito wanted to ask.

*Why are you making such a face?*, Taito wanted to ask.

But, at the same time, all of a sudden, a siren sounded throughout the school. And following that,

"The cleanup has been completed. The student council executive members can return home if they wish. Thanks for today's hard work."

The monotonous voice of a woman announced.

On hearing that, he turned his sight to the speaker installed on the rooftop. And with a heave, he sat up.

"Seems like everything has ended."

After saying that, he put Haruka's bento box back into his bag that was lying on the floor and stood up.

Himea then looked at Taito. With her usual happy smile, she looked at him.

The brief flash of sadness which he saw earlier was no longer visible on her face. With her usual mischievous gaze, she looked at him intently.

*Huh, perhaps I was imagining things just now*, Taito thought.

He once again looked up at the dark sky which seemed about to rain, and then looked at Himea again,

"Then, I'm heading home."

He said.

Himea then nodded,

"Then, I shall go home with Tait....."

But, in a frantic manner, Taito responded,

"Uh wait, as I had been saying before, you can't."

"Why~"

"Even if you ask me that, my parents and sister are at home you see ~, but aside from that, didn't Gekkou say that Himea shouldn't go out of the school for some time right? Since there are a lot of people going after Himea."

Said Taito.

On hearing that, Himea pouted unhappily, but, *You can't do that as well*, Taito had to say to her.

And then he thought about what Gekkou had said with regards to the rather difficult circumstances that she was embroiled in.

By the way, on top of giving a difficult explanation, that stupid student council president Gekkou, since perhaps the time he was in his mother womb, had forgotten about standing in the shoes of the person asking a question, and neglected to make even the slightest effort in explaining things kindly, and consequently, Taito was unable to grasp the exact situation properly.

However, after sorting out the information he had, this was how it was.

In any case, in the past, she was the comrade of the villainous Bahlskra, the name of a monster who had committed various sorcery crimes, and thus, the preconception that "'a comrade of Bahlskra' = 'dangerous fella'!" was held by various organizations that consequently were after her.

On top of that, she was a << V a m p i r e **Most Ancient Sorcerer** >>, a very rare race, and her immense rare powers were sought after by various organizations, thus making her a target for them.

By the way, when Taito was in the student council room listening to the explanation, he had innocently asked, *are these organizations you're talking about perhaps referring to the CIA or NASA or something like that?*, and that damn Gekkou replied, "Die, idiot. Go make a rocket with NASA, ride in it to the moon, and don't come back", making him feel like killing the cocky bastard later.

And so, because of this and that, Himea was a pretty famous person, and once she stepped outside, there would be plenty of enemies waiting for her. However, there was one place which could hide her from the eyes of her enemies and protect her from them.

And that, for some reason, was this Miyasaka High ---

In any case, this school was built on top of a unique ground, where one can open any number of dimensional portals, and open a door, a way, to connect to alternate dimensions or any place in the world as and when he likes.

Gekkou had some kind of grandiose name and he termed this ground the **<< Holy Ground >>**, but that aside, it could open a door to probably anywhere, he thought.

Even to mysterious places that were outside of this world.

And, if one uses this place called the **<< Holy Ground >>** or something like that, he can connect to infinite number of worlds, and from them, attain curses, science, magic, weapons, monsters, otherworldly objects, et cetera, et cetera, which makes this place an enticing place to organizations like NASA, and as such, another mysterious group known as the **<< Military >>** had said, *If the secret of this place is known to the public, it will become the target of various world organizations, so we must hide it! We must hide it!*.

So, in order to hide it from other countries, a building was about to be built on it, however, upon investigation, the only ones who can open the dimensional portal to come and go are kids under eighteen.

And so, in order to manipulate children and manage the dimensional portal, a school --- this Miysaka High --- was built under that pretext.

Even as we narrate this from the start, in sequential order, it would seem like the school was a dangerously shady place but.....

But only the student council members and the shady people underground, clad in military uniforms which he had never seen before, belonging to the organization called **<< Military >>** were privy to the truth.

The rest were unaware of the truth.

Both the teachers and the students were unaware of the truth behind this crazy school.

On top of that, in order to make this school hard to find for other organizations that had a keen interest in the magical things of other countries, a barrier was erected, making it a place of utmost secrecy.

However, thanks to that, the fact that Himea was being sheltered here was also unbeknownst to others,

*"There are many enemies, and it's best for Saitohimea to stay here for a while."*

And that's how events had turned out.

Furthermore, Gekkou had said,

*"Well, in the near future, the* ***<< Military >>*** *will also negotiate with the other organizations to a certain extent, and strike an agreement. So, until then, just get her to stay here obediently."*

And that's why he couldn't let Himea go out of the school.

That's why while, Taito looked intently at the pouting Himea,

"In any case, you can't do that."

He said in a somewhat strong tone.

With a dissatisfied look,

"Then, stay in the school here with me ~. I was already living in solitude for so long, and yet, now, I still have to live here by myself; that makes me sad, you know."

On hearing that, for just an instant, the thought of a single girl sleeping overnight in the school could be a scary one, but, that thought got busted at the recollection of the visit to the room in which she will be sleeping in.

By the way, currently, the room she was staying was a famous forbidden area in the inner part of the science room. When Taito just came to this school, he had heard the rumor about how the door to that room had not been opened in ten over years, since after all, that was the place when a girl by the name of Manami had committed suicide after getting dumped, and ever since then, the ghost of "Manami-san", would assault the girls night after night, and consequently, she was sealed by a famous monk --- even though such a scary story had spread, the truth was however different.

That forbidden area, had actually been turned into a luxurious room resembling a hotel suite room, and was used by the **<< Military >>** as a guest room to extend their hospitality to friendly **<<** Monsters **G u e s t s >>** from the other worlds.

And he started fantasizing how it would be like if he and Himea were to stay in that room together.

"....."

He started fantasizing about an adolescent couple getting intimate on a hotel bed as they spent the night together.

After fantasizing for a while, mosaics suddenly started appearing in his imaginary scene,

"Ah, ah, we can't do this. We really can't do this."

Said Taito.

On hearing that,

"What's the matter?"

Himea asked in a bored tone.

But, in a defensive tone, Taito replied,

"Nothing! Anyway, I'm kind of tired for today, so I'm going home. It seems like it's going to rain soon."

And he looked up at the sky.

The clouds looked pretty menacing. It seemed like it was going to rain in any minute.

"And besides, I didn't bring my umbrella today."

On hearing that, Himea curled her lips.

"Hm~m."

She said.

"Erm, I'll be coming tomorrow morning."

"Hm~m."

"..... wait, erm, are you angry?"

Taito asked with a troubled expression on his face, to which Himea smiled.

"Just kid~ding ~. I'm not angry. I know that you also have your own life to live. You're a human after all."

She said.

*You're a human after all*, she had said that with a tinge of sadness. Following that, she looked up at the sky. She looked up at the sky which seemed like it could rain in any minute,

"..... seems like the moon will not be visible today."

"Yeah, probably."

"So, you're going home now?"

"Er~m, well no, I can stay until the night, I guess."

But, Himea smiled on hearing that.

"It's fine, just go. Besides, it's going to rain. We'll see each other again tomorrow. Well well, let me return to my room as well, and have a chat with Manami-san."

She said. Following that, she turned on her heel, and lightly skipped back to the rooftop entrance.

Taito nodded. And he started following after Himea,

"..... eh?"

He uttered as it hit him.

And again,

"..... ehh? Wait, wait a minute. Himea, did you say something weird just now?"

He asked.

She turned her head around in response. She had a *what's wrong?* look on her face as she tilted her head,

"Something weird?"

"Yeah."

"Which part? Was it weird when I said I'm returning to my room?"

But Taito shook his head.

"No no no, the part after that. Something about having a chat with Manami-san....."

On hearing that, Himea's face beamed. She gazed at him happily,

"Ah ~ Taito, are you jealous of my new friend?"

She said something incomprehensible.

"But it's alright you know. Manami-san is a female."

She said something incomprehensible.

Taito then exclaimed,

"Ehhhhhhh? The Manami-san you're talking about is that Manami-san?"

For some reason, Himea had an even more bewildered expression than him at that question,

"Manami-san is Manami-san, what's so surprising about that?"

"Wait, I should be asking why Himea isn't surprised by that? Isn't Manami-san the rumored ghost in that forbidden area?"

However, Himea's head tilted even further at that.

"..... so why should I be surprised at a human spirit?"

She replied promptly.

She replied with a completely bewildered face.

On hearing that.

"....."

Taito could only stare at her face. He stared at unworldly beautiful face. Rather, he stared at the beautiful face of someone who was truly not of this world. As he stared at the face of the being called a << V a m p i r e **Most Ancient Sorcerer** >>, a being that was more of a monster than a mere ghost, he could not help but feel embarrassed at his own silliness."

In fact, he was embarrassed at himself for getting surprised at the topic of one of the seven mysteries of the school, even when he had just fought a snake monster which had devoured hundreds of students during lunch time,

"..... ahh, erm.....forget that. Even this school will have a ghost or two I guess....."

Himea smiled,

"Manami-san isn't a ghost though."

She said.

"Not a ghost?"

"Yeah."

"Then, what is she?"

"A monster fox that has possessed a Japanese doll."

On hearing her words --- Taito ended up imagining a slanted-eye Japanese doll yelping like a fox and brandishing a kitchen knife as she walks in the darkness,

"..... heehhh ~. I shouldn't have asked."

He groaned.

"So, you've befriended her?"

"Yeah, when it came attacking me and got beaten back, she went, *I'm so sorry. I thought it was a pesky human*, and then gave me something known as inarizushi to eat."

"Is she Oinari-san!"

"Oinari-san?"

"Well, I mean, she's a deity-sa..... ahhhh, forget it. Even though I can't understand why the fox goddess is living in the hotel room-like forbidden area of the school , let's leave it at that. In any case, it's good to have made a friend."

Said Taito,

"Yeah!"

To which Himea nodded happily in acknowledgement. She then raised both her arms high up in the air,

"I got back back my freedom thanks to Taito remembering me. And right now, I'm really so overjoyed!"

As the 'joy' syllable of the word 'overjoyed' was uttered, she embraced Taito again. Because she truly seemed to be overjoyed, Taito was at a loss of words as he was being hugged.

He looked at her slender shoulder as he was being hugged. He looked at her beaming face with the happiness from making a single friend written all over it. He looked at the girl who was easily, overjoyed at seeing a croquette bread, overjoyed at seeing the sun, and overjoyed at seeing rain.

"....."

Taito's face contorted at the heavy thought of the past nine years that she had spent in captivity.

Even though he had promised her.

Even though he had promised her that he would protect her, his words were all lies.

Because he was too weak, she had ended up getting ill-treated.

He was fed-up with his own pusillanimous weakness. As he looked at her beaming face, he thought in the depths of his heart that he was definitely not going to let something like that happen ever again.

"....."

That's why, he had been doing an embarrassing thing every day.

In order to acquire the strength to protect her from something like Hinata in the future, he had been doing an embarrassing thing.

In order to make use of the special attribute of being able to die six times in fifteen minutes without truly dying, each day after school, while he was thinking about what was the best way to fight, he had been engaging in some training-like activity in secret.

Even today, the reason why he was planning to take off quickly and go home was for that training.

Wait, to call it training might be a little embarrassing. *Is this dragon ball!", he retorted to himself.*

But, he didn't want to have any of those regrets anymore.

To see a girl crying before him, and because of his weakness, have everything come to naught. That kind of scene was something he didn't want to experience anymore.

"....."

Taito grabbed her shoulders and pushed her away from him. And then,

"..... I'm glad that Himea is having fun every day."

He said.

She raised her head and with a beaming face again,

"I'm always having fun when I'm with Taito ~"

She said.

"I love you, Taito."

She said.

Even though Taito could only make a troubled expression on hearing that; *well, if she's happy, it's alright I guess*, he thought.

Under the prolonged gaze from Himea, on reflex, he averted his eyes. As he did that, he could see raindrops falling onto the ground which he just laid on. Patter, patter, patter, the drops kept falling ---

Suddenly.

*Gagagagaan*! An ear-splitting thunderous sound rang out. It was as if lightning had just struck his head.

Because of the extreme loud noise, his body flinched without thinking.

"Woah, did lightning strike close by?"

Taito turned to look at his surroundings.

However, the sky did not light up. He could see not any flashes of lightning in the sky.

But, once again, the thunderous *gagagagaan* rang out again, causing his body to stiffen for an instant. No, not just his body. The sound was so loud that it seemed like the entire school was shaken.

Even though the sky did not light up, but yet, the noise was reverberating very close by. Feeling surprised, Taito scanned his surroundings again.

"Normally, does the thunder come before the lightning?"

But, Taito's voice was drowned out by the thunderous noise which rang out again.

And all around him, patter, patter, patter, patter, raindrops started falling.

*Just as I thought, it rained*, Taito was about to say but stopped short. He lost his words because the pattering rain was no rain.

The raindrops that were falling were red.

Just like blood.

As if it was stained with something foul, the red droplets had started falling onto the rooftop.

"..... what's this?"

Said Taito.

Himea looked up at the sky. She no longer had the happy, relaxed face as before, but instead, she looked up at the sky with a pair of stern, dubiously deep crimson eyes which no high school girl would possess.

She looked intently at the sky, as if she was desperately searching for something distant. A red droplet fell onto her cheek. Stretching her small cute tongue out, she licked that droplet.

And then.

And then a small smile floated on her face,

"..... Taito."

"What's up?"

"Get back into the premise. It seems like it's not good to have too much of this rain falling onto you."

"Even if you said that, Himea, you just tasted that rain, are you ok?"

"I'm ok..... after all, I do have a resistance to this..... but it's not ok for you. Taito, you may not have noticed it, but because of this rain, you've already died twice."

"Huh? Are you kidding?"

Taito said. And he looked at his own body.

However, he couldn't find any sign of him dying.....

But, at that moment, his right arm tore off as if it had rotted away.

"Woah woah woah, what the hell is this?"

"Poison."

"Poison?"

"Yes. The same type of << Black Magic **P o i s o n** >> of mine."

On hearing that, Taito remembered.

About the time when she injected her poison into him.

About the time when she injected her << Black Magic **P o i s o n** >>.

It seemed like this thing called << Black Magic **P o i s o n** >> was a magic that was imbued with a special type of power and was usable by only << V a m p i r e s **Most Ancient Sorcerers** >>.

It seemed like it was a magic imbued with a supernatural power and was usable by only << V a m p i r e s **Most Ancient Sorcerers** >>.

And it was for that power that Hinata had come attacking them then.

And it was due to the fear of that power that the << **Church** >> had held her in captivity.

In other words, for this << Black Magic **P o i s o n** >> to be activated here,

"..... does this mean there's another << V a m p i r e **Most Ancient Sorcerer** >> here besides Himea?"

Taito asked. While he was forcibly attaching his torn off arm back, he asked.

She then looked at him,

"I don't feel anything of that sort though..... then again, if Hinata was telling the truth when he said that he had killed the other three <<Vampires **Most Ancient Sorcerers** >>, it means that I should be the only <<Vampire **Most Ancient Sorcerer** >> left."

"Well, who's invoking the magic then?"

"I don't know. But in any case, I think it's dangerous to stay outside. Let's go back to the student council room and link up with Gekkou for now."

After saying that, she pulled on Taito's arm. With just that pull, this time round, Taito's entire arm came off from his shoulder socket. Looking at that severed arm, Himea laughed with a troubled face.

"..... hey, Taito has already died four times. If you don't get out of the rain quickly, you will really die you know."

"I won't want that. Duh, it's really bad that I'm dying needlessly."

Taito thought.

If once again, Himea was targeted by someone, then it was possible that a fight might ensue soon.

But, if he had already died four times, then Taito could only die another two times in that battle. If he did, then he might not be able to protect Himea again.

That's why,

"Let's go."

Taito said and started running. As he did so, his legs wobbled forward. For some reason, his legs also seemed about to come off.

"Uwahh....."

As his legs seemed about to give way,

"Got you."

Himea said as she came to hold Taito up. *Are you ok?*, she asked, and he nodded. As his body was on the verge of collapsing, there was no way he would be ok, but for now, he just acknowledged that he was. Even right now, he was being helped by the person he wanted to protect, how pathetic, he thought.

And with that, they moved to the rooftop entrance and entered the building. And closed the door. Then, Taito's ragged body started regenerating back to normal. To the point he could stand without Himea holding him up, and following that, she handed him back his torn off arm, and he reattached it to his shoulder. After which he flexed his arm two, three times.

"Alright, I'm back."

He said.

He then turned around and looked at the closed door of the rooftop. A warning was pasted on the door. *"Entry forbidden to students. Offenders will be called to the principal's office."* Well, with that dangerous rain, it couldn't be helped that entry was forbidden now.

And then, he thought back to the red rain that was falling on the other side of this door. *Is something big going to happen here again*, he thought,

"....."

Well of course, there was no way he would know what was going to happen. Then again, he only got to know that such irregular things had been happening frequently in this world just a week ago.

That's why he had no idea what was about to happen.

In other words, he needed to get to the person who would have an idea about what was going to happen.

*Ah ~, geez, damn,*

"Alright, let's get back to the student council room."

Said Taito.

While saying that, he started considering about whether he should include a little bit of magic studies in his training for the upcoming battles. Though he had no idea what exactly he should study.

"....."

However, as if she had seen through all of Taito's thoughts, Himea started,

"Taito."

"Yeah?"

"Don't worry about it. Since Taito is the one I've chosen, you will definitely become strong."

As she said that, she gave a few pats to his back.

And he looked intently at her face,

"..... how will that happen, I wonder....."

He lamented as he descended the stairs.

He was heading to the center part of the fifth floor of the school premises.

To the student council room that was ruled by a high and mighty idiot.

# The Moon Sways

About thirty minutes ago.

After the fight with the silver-haired monster, who had manipulated the Geinvikku, had ended, Gekkou returned to the student council room.

The student council room, a place known as the **<< Holy Ground >>**, which could be used to manage dimensional warps, was but an ordinary looking room that did not appear to hold any particular special power.

The room had an untidy document shelf, and a whiteboard on which the idiot Mirai had scrawled a drawing of some strange dog.  On an oblong meeting desk was a thermo pot and a small cup with a teabag. As well as four caffeine tablets.

Gekkou popped one of the caffeine tablets into his mouth and took a drink of the red tea.

Since last night, until this morning, he had been writing a report for the **<< Military >>**, and consequently, he was sleep-deprived.

With that, he leaned his body against the back of his chair,

"Hn ~"

And stretched his body. Following that,

"I'm sleepy."

He muttered.

But, it was not yet time to sleep.

Originally, he planned to submit his report to the **<< Military >>** in the morning at the time when the ignorant students were arriving, and take the day off and head back home to sleep. But instead, after submitting the report, just as he was making the preparations to go home, a strange report reached him.

In early hours of the morning, a janitor had disappeared from the stairs. The report reached Gekkou at six in the morning. It was only after some time had passed, just before noon break, after which several students had disappeared, did he know that the culprit behind all these was snake-like monster known as a Geinvikku.

Following that, the order to exterminate the Geinvikku came from the **<< Military >>**, and everything had ended only just a while ago.

And then.

"....."

At that moment, Gekkou looked at the pile of documents beside the thermo pot.

Those pile of documents consisted of:

- A report regarding the extermination of the Geinvikku.

- A report regarding why the Geinvikku was allowed to infiltrate the school.

- A report regarding the situation of the victims of the Geinvikku.

- A report regarding the cost of repairs to the school, and so on.

It was necessary to submit those documents to quell all those stupid questions.

Looking at them, with a vexed face,

"..... those damn useless officials."

Saying that, he raised his long legs. With the sole of his shoe, he kicked away the pile of documents. The documents fell off and scattered onto the floor.

Looking down at the messed up, scattered documents,

"..... not enough people. I need a s l a v e secretary to do all these dirty work for me."

He said.

And at that moment,

"Tada!"

From the rear door of the student council room, the voice of a girl called out.

"Tada tada!"

*Look here, look here*, the voice of a girl called out --- but, as if he had heard nothing, Gekkou did not turn around. And he folded his arms. And closed his eyes. Seemingly lost in thoughts.

"Heyyyyyyyyyyyyyy, why are you ignoring meeeeeeeeeee!"

As she hollered, he felt an approaching pressure. He felt an approaching, troublesome pressure.

But, in response to that,

"Hey Mirai. If you dare kick me, I will burn away all those manga that you've bought from the money you secretly lifted from my wallet."

Said Gekkou.

"..... ah-uwu-ah."

She whimpered in fear. He looked in the direction of that voice. What he saw before him was a short high school girl with a pair of calm eyes that were somehow embedded with a strong will in contrast, and seemingly indifferent to her up-turned skirt, she was about to send a kick flying towards Gekkou.

It was the student council executive member, Andou Mirai, who had fallen off the veranda from the fourth floor just a while ago.

He looked at the sole of her shoe. He looked below that shoe. From the calf length to the thigh, the inside of her skirt seemed just about to become visible,

"U-uwah!?"

Yelled Mirai. She put her leg down and pressed down her skirt. Her childish face --- or rather, the fact was she was still a fourteen year old child, it was not like she was really that much of a child --- that small face was red from both anger and embarrassment,

"Ge-Gekkou, you pervert!"

She yelled.

Gekkou looked intently at Mirai. According to the guys in year one class four into which she had been enrolled, Mirai was a little out but cute; Gekkou looked intently at that cute face, and said.

"..... I have no interest in the panties of a brat....."

"They are not dirtyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyy!?"

This time for certain, Mirai had hollered with a face that was completely beet red.

Her holler was loud enough to send one's ears ringing, and Gekkou covered his right ear with his hand in exasperation. Following that, he once again averted his eyes from Mirai. He leaned back, closed his eyes, and considered ---

"Hey, as I was saying, why are you ignoring me?"

"You're annoying."

"I'm not annoyingggggggggggggggg! Jeez! Hey! The cute Mirai-chan fell off the veranda with her powers still sealed by you, but you are not even the least bit of worried?"

As she said that, Gekkou opened his eyes slightly.

"Are you hurt?"

On hearing that, Mirai puffed out her small chest proudly,

"Not a single scratch!"

"Then disappear."

"You should be praising me ~!"

She said boisterously, but Gekkou, tired of answering, merely ignored her. With that, he closed his eyes, and concentrated on thinking about the matters he needed to think about now. Bit by bit, the effect of the caffeine tablet started taking effect and the sleepiness he had started dispersing, and he began his thoughts.

And he pondered about the incident that had taken place on the fourth floor of the west area of the school premises just a while ago.

He thought about the abnormally strong silver monster that was inside of the Geinvikku.

He thought about that monster against which the Spell Error **Wicked Blade** was ineffective, and which had been able to handle him, the student council president of Miyasaka High, easily.

"....."

Then, he clicked his tongue softly. However, even if he puffed out his cheeks in anger, there was nothing he could do, so he continued thinking.

Firstly, what on earth was he?

As he thought about that, once again, he opened his narrow eyes and turned his sight to the jet black sword that was leaning against the desk.

He turned his sight to that unique sword that was supposed to be able to exorcise all kinds of demonic force.

However, that unique sword seemed to have no effect against that monster.

Gekkou pondered about the reason for that.

While looking intently at his sword,

"..... Mirai."

He said.

Mirai, who had clearly given up on talking to Gekkou and was kicking the documents on the floor, playing by herself, turned around.

He said to her,

"Did you see it?"

He asked.

She tilted her head and replied.

"See what?"

"The monster who was rampaging in class 8. The one who tried to pierce you with its tongue."

On hearing that,

"Ahh, yeah. I did ~"

She acknowledged. Gekkou looked up and fixed his gaze on Mirai. And he asked.

"Is that your comrade?"

But she shook her head,

"No ~. That fella is different from me; he isn't a demon."

She said.

*That fella is different from me; he isn't a demon* --- if an ordinary person had heard her said that, he or she would probably cry out, *Is this girl right in the mind? Even at this age, she's wearing panties with an anime character design on them.....*

But her words were fact.

She was not just your everyday high school girl, but a demon contracted by Gekkou.

And right now, most of her powers were sealed by Gekkou's Spell Error **Wicked Blade**, but once the seal was lifted, her powers would increase immensely.

Well, according to her,

*"I'm a big-shot demon who is the only descendant of Indra, and in me flows the blood of Andu!"*

Even when she said that, given how little brain tissue she clearly possessed, it seemed like a lie.

But it was a fact that she was a demon.

That's why she was perfectly fine even after falling off the veranda at the fourth floor, and was allowed by the **<< Military >>** to enroll into Miyasaka High despite her young age of fourteen.

That Mirai of Andu looked intently at Gekkou.

That petite demon who was wearing the sailor uniform of Miyasaka High looked intently at Gekkou.

And facing this one against whom Spell Error **Wicked Blade** had an effect, after following a trail of his own thoughts, he continued.

"..... hm. Just from one look, you know that it isn't a demon?"

He asked, and she nodded in acknowledgement.

"I know of course. Even if I didn't catch a look, I would still know. I can tell a demon by the wavelength it carries in its blood."

"I see. So that's how it is."

"Yeah. Somehow, compared to other lesser beings, demons have a much more nobler type of blood flowing in their veins, that's what Mama said, you know?"

On hearing that, once again, *hm*, Gekkou acknowledged and folded his arms.

In other words, that silver-haired monster was indeed not a demon.

But just going by that, it was not sufficient a reason for Spell Error **Wicked Blade** to have not worked on him.

At any rate, even though this sword was said to be one that could exorcise any sort of **Demonic Force**, the truth was, it was not just limited to **Demonic Force**, but regardless of the species, whatever kind of power, it should have the power to sever it.

That applied to even the power of gods.

That was Spell Error **Wicked Blade**. And it was after knowing that the sword actually possessed such great power, did Gekkou acquire it.

It was for the sake of triumphing over his little brother, Hinata, did Gekkou acquire the sword in desperation.

Nevertheless.

"....."

Today, he had been made the fool again.

The little brother he thought he had killed was still alive. On top of that, he had sent an incredibly powerful monster against which Spell Error **Wicked Blade** had no effect. Furthermore, as if he had not been made the fool enough, he had been told,

"..... a warning..... for me?"

At that moment, a smile floated on Gekkou's face. The gritting of his molars could be heard as a smile floated on his face.

On seeing that,

"What's so funny ~?"

Asked Mirai, but he did not reply.

He only thought, if that silver-haired monster were to come again, how could he kill it?

He only thought, if that irritating little brother of his were to show his smirking face again, how could he make a fool out of him?

"....."

But, in order to do that, he needed to be able to do something to that silver-haired monster, he thought.

He needed to able to do something to that silver-haired monster against which Spell Error **Wicked Blade** had no effect, he thought.

Of course, during the earlier fight, he had experimented on various ways of killing him.

He thought back on those ways.

*- Is it that all forms of magic will fail against that silver-haired monster?*

*- Or is it that only* Spell Error ***Wicked Blade*** *won't work on him?*

During that fight, he experimented around these two factors.

First, he had tried a Japanese talisman.

Even if it could be used to exorcise all forms of **Demonic Force**, Spell Error **Wicked Blade** was still made in Europe after all. Thus, while it might be effectively used to exterminate European monsters, its effectiveness might be lessened when used against Asian or African monsters right? He thought, and thus tried throwing a Japan-made talisman, to which the silver-haired monster reacted.

While he showed no signs of wariness against Spell Error **Wicked Blade**, he reacted when faced with the talisman of King Enn.

Did that mean that the fella had come through a dimensional rift from the Asian region and was active in that region? Gekkou deduced from that battle.

Then, this time round, he would try releasing the spell of the Inugami. The spell of the Inugami should be much more powerful than the talisman of King Enn. The amount of power it had was enough to kill off a local deity.

And he released it at a point-blank distance, but, somehow, it seemed to be completely ineffective.

That fella just laughed and stopped the spell.

The only monsters or goblins that were capable of doing that in the Asian region, should only be those of an upper tier level.

"....."

Or perhaps, when he showed fear towards the talisman of King Enn, it was actually a bluff? And he actually was a monster who had come from Europe? He had reasoned and this time round, from the inside of his leather shoe, he tossed a d a r t holy needle, something made from silver by the **<< Church >>** to be easily used against the blood suckers[3] they were hunting recently, that was soaked in holy water for twenty hours.

But, that was readily stopped too. It was stopped with a nonchalant face. Then, that fella might not be a monster from Europe as well.

Then, what the hell was that?

Was it a monster from another dimension that had yet to step into this world in history?

Gekkou pondered.

"....."

Well, there were a lot of monsters that were like that. That were still a lot of monsters that had not appeared in this world yet. There were still many monsters against which humans had yet to establish a way to counter them yet.

Speaking of this, when he read the archives, sometimes, this student council room had connected to dimensions of worlds which had never been seen before, in which lived monsters which had never been sighted before, and consequently on occasion, the student council executive members, as well as the residents of the town, were completely wiped out. Though the **<< Military >>** had erased the relevant knowledge and memories, such a thing where the entire town was destroyed had happened twice in a hundred years or so.

For this matter to be still concealed from the public, this strange organization known as the **<< Military >>**, was probably an official arm of the Japanese government, though that was something that Gekkou was not interested in.

Nothing can be achieved alone; the fact was he had not the slightest interest in the individuals of the swarm.

At any rate, Hinata had made an enemy out of the world all by himself.

Then, neither did he need any comrades, he thought.

Everything was a slave that he would make use of to reach his goal.

"....."

At that moment, Gekkou shifted his gaze, to Mirai, who was scrawling on the white board in the student council room while she was humming a song.

And then, he thought.

With an exasperated face, he thought.

He thought about the slight problem of the slaves, whom he was supposed to make use of, proving to be extremely troublesome and useless at times.

Then, as if she had felt his gaze, Mirai turned around happily,

"Look look Gekkou. This is Gekkou you know!"

On hearing that, he looked at the whiteboard. And on that whiteboard was a pretty good illustration, a result of her recent practice perhaps.

It was a drawing of a person with an evil gaze and black hair that reeked of a bad personality.

And beside that drawing was a bubble, and in that bubble,

*"I'm a genius you know ~"*

Was written.

"It's really like Gekkou right!?"

Mirai said happily. Raising both her arms, she said happily. She was saying it so happily, that a smile floated on Gekkou's face, and he acknowledged.

"Hm. Very much."

"Isn't it so?"

"Yeah. And you're a good kid. You've always been a good kid, so I'll reward you."

On hearing that, her eyes glittered,

"Really!?"

She asked.

"Really. Here."

As he said that, he threw the thermo pot containing hot water from the desk towards Mirai.

On seeing that,

"Eh? Eh? Are you kidding me? Gyaaaaaaaaaaa!?"

She yelled. And dodged. As she did that, the flask struck the *"I'm a genius you know ~"* writing on the board. The cap opened. And the hot water splashed out. Looking at that, Mirai's eyes widened,

"Yikesssssssss!?"

She yelled. She rolled onto the floor and dodged it. With that, as she rolled to Gekkou's feet, he stepped on her to stop her, and said.

"..... now, you've avoided the flask just now. Why?"

As he continued stepping on her,

"Take your foot offffffffffffffff~!?"

As Mirai yelled, he further increased the pressure of his leg. Mirai grabbed that leg with her right hand. And pushed it aside.

Mirai easily pushed away Gekkou's leg, the leg of a man. With the arm strength which a normal high school girl would not possess, she returned the favor.

That was her strength. Even if Spell Error **Wicked Blade** had sealed away seventy percent of her powers, human strength was still incomparable to hers.

But, she dodged the thermo pot. With a strength that was far greater than a human, she dodged the thermo pot.

The reason was of course because it was hot. With this level of heat, it was not clear what would become of Mirai, but still, since it was hot, she dodged.

And similar to this ---

Once again, Gekkou returned to his thoughts. *Why did you throw the thermo pot*, *What if I got scalded*; Gekkou ignored those complaints from Mirai, and returned to his earlier thoughts.

"....."

Similar to how Mirai had dodged the thermo pot, the sliver-haired monster warded against the talisman of King Enn before it was activated.

That was the same for spell of the Inugami, which was neutralized preemptively.

The silver d a r t holy needle was also caught by its tongue before it could deal any damage.

However.

Against Spell Error **Wicked Blade**, he did not nothing. It was as if he already knew from the beginning that it had no effect on him. It was as if he could not feel any sense of possible danger, such as the possible infliction of pain or heat, he did nothing against it.

In other words,

"....."

Gekkou thought.

Only Spell Error **Wicked Blade** was ineffective against him.

At that moment, Gekkou recalled.

The words of the former owner of the sword, a drunkard Father.

The words:

*That sword,* Spell Error ***Wicked Blade****, should be able to exorcise all forms of* ***Power****, all but one.*

*It is something of a fouler nature than a demon.*

*It is something of a fouler nature than a god.*

If Gekkou remembered correctly, when he heard those words at the age of thirteen, he had said.

*"I can't think of a monster with a fouler nature than a god..... other than humans."*

*On hearing that, the drunkard Father, with red face full of wrinkles, laughed.*

*"Haha, well, you're right about that too."*

*"..... then, what on earth is the monster against which the sword is weak."*

*"Do you want to know?"*

*"Don't put on airs. I'll kill you, you know."*

*On hearing that, the Father laughed. His face flushed from the effects of liquor, carrying a white beard, the Father who appeared to be in his late sixties laughed.*

*"Good grief, such audacity for a brat..... well, to be able to come through the barrier, you probably aren't just any mere brat..... who are you?"*

*"I'm a genius."*

*On hearing that, the Father's eyes widened for an instant, and he laughed even harder.*

*"Hahaha, what an interesting fella. So, Mr Genius wants this sword?"*

*"That's right."*

*"If you have it, what will you use it for?"*

*"I will kill my little brother who has made fun of me."*

*"Hehe~. Ever since I've been made the guardian of this sword, this is the most worthless reason I've heard. Are you serious?"*

*He asked, and,*

*"If I'm not serious, I wouldn't have come up to this mountain in the countryside, to see an alcoholic old man."*

*Gekkou replied.*

*On hearing that, the old man looked intently at Gekkou. With his small eyes, intoxicated by the liquor, he looked intently at Gekkou.*

*And then.*

*"Well, whoever it is, for whatever reason one has come to take this sword, all that don't matter to me..... at any rate, you won't be able to pull the sword out of its scabbard. If you're not chosen by the sword, you won't be able to use it....."*

*But he was interrupted by Gekkou, who said.*

*"Stop the tedious talk. Hand me the sword. And tell me the name of the creature the sword is weak against."*

*Once again, the old man laughed and said 'Fine'. 'After all, a brat had climbed all the way here all by himself. I shall let him have a taste of a fairy tale regarding swords', he had said.*

*And he began explaining the story behind* Spell Error ***Wicked Blade***.

*"This sword was actually made from the melted form of a spear that was used to kill a certain holy man. Do you know? The name of the spear."*

*He asked, to which Gekkou replied.*

*"Whatever, hand over the sword."*

*"..... hey, you should listen....."*

*"Whatever, hand over the sword."*

*"..... this fella..... didn't you learn from your mother that you should be polite and respectful to elders....."*

*"Whatever, I told you to hand over the sword, you drunkard."*

*"..... this, this, this brat..... well, well, alright. Recently, I've heard a rumor that kids didn't get enough calcium. But, but if you really want to try pulling out the sword, just hear out for a little while. I've watched over this sword for such a long time that I'm kind of starved for a conversation....."*

*"If it's tough being lonely, just go die. Old fart. Quickly hand over the sword."*

*"....."*

*For some reason, he could see the clenched fists of the old man shaking. He probably drank too much. Following that, with a resigned look on his face, the old man ignored him and resumed his talk.*

*"..... well, even if you don't know it, there was this famous spear that was used to kill a holy man. The one that starts with 'Lo'[4], you know? With that, you should know right?"*

*"Hm. So, how many minutes is your boring talk going to take?"*

*"..... no no, you should at least be a little surprised right? That spear you know? The spear that killed the Savior, you know? That cursed spear depicted often in movies and novels in this place ---!? Such a tale, never seen....."*

*"Not interested."*

*"Hear me out anyway."*

*"Just tell me how the story ends. Didn't I tell you your talk is boring?"*

*On hearing those words, this time round,*

*"..... uwu, uwu, uwoahhhhhhhhhhhhhh, what's this! What the hell is with this fella! God! Why have you given me such a trialllllllll!?"*

*Things as they were, the Father started shouting in a deranged manner, and as a result, Gekkou decided to knock him out for now. Following that, he took the liquor bottle that the Father was carrying away from him, and tossed it away onto the ground, breaking the bottle, and said.*

*"What God, did you drink too much that you start to hallucinate? Didn't the bible say alcohol is one of the roots of evil? Go read the bible duh."*

*After that, he looked intently at the* Spell Error ***Wicked Blade*** *that was affixed to the back of the cross of the church, then took it off.*

*He then hung the scabbard at his waist, and tried drawing the sword, which then slid out easily,*

*"..... I can't draw it? What a lie."*

*He muttered.*

*Following that, he splashed water onto the unconscious deranged Father to wake him up, and pointed the unsheathed* Spell Error ***Wicked Blade*** *at his head, touching it,*

*"Now, I've gotten the sword. If there's something else important that you need to say, speak quickly. Since I don't have much time, go to the conclusion."*

*He said.*

*The Father looked at the sword. With look of extreme surprise, he looked at the sword,*

*"The, the one I have been waiting for..... is such a guy....."*

*Since he was clear digressing from what Gekkou wanted to hear, he put the sword against the Father's neck.*

*"..... I said to start from the conclusion. I'm different from an old man idling away his remaining years, and don't have much time. In another three years, I might be killed and devoured by a demon. If you still want to waste my time, I'm going to kill you, you know?"*

*On hearing those words, the Father looked at him.*

*"Killed and devoured by a demon.....?"*

*But, Gekkou increased the pressure on his blade,*

*"I won't repeat myself. Stop with the needless talk."*

*And the Father laughed. With the sword next to his throat, he laughed.*

*"..... coming to take the sword for the sake of killing your little brother, and yet, you might get killed and devoured by a demon? I see. I get it. I get why the sword has chosen you. The both of you are twins right?"*

*"....."*

*"Bull's eye? Haha. I see. That's how it is. Then fine. I shall give you the sword. It's okay for you to use that sword to split open the world."*

*On hearing his words, Gekkou squinted his eyes. And then,*

*"..... your talk has become a little interesting. Continue. How did you know that we are twins?"*

*"Didn't you say that you don't need the explanation? And just the conclusion....."*

*"Enough of that, just continue. I'll kill you, you know?"*

*Going by those words, the Father had finally gotten the upper hand and could only smile delightedly.*

*"Do it then. Since the rightful owner of the sword had appeared, I don't have any more regrets."*

*"The rightful owner of the sword? What do you mean by that?"*

*"The prophecy has foretold of your coming. That one part of the double headed, unfortunate crow will come take the sword. Well then again, if you are the rightful owner of the sword, there's nothing more I need to say. While you use the sword, the truth will be revealed by the sword."*

*The Father merely snickered. And did not answer Gekkou's question. And then,*

*"I shall just tell you the conclusion I know. Firstly, with regards to what I've said earlier, the point about this sword being forged from the Spear of Longinus that was used to kill Christ was but a lie prepared for the Hollywood-loving Americans when they came here. The truth is it's not possible to tell what the sword is made of. At any rate, before the Vatican was established --- no, even way before Christ was born, it was handed to the* ***<< Church >>****, it seems."*

*On hearing those words, Gekkou looked intently at the sword.*

*Before Christ was born, which means at least over two thousand years ago, but, when he looked at the black gleam of the blade which he held up to reflect the light that was streaming through the stained glass of the church, he could not tell that it had already existed for such a long period of time.*

*The Father looked intently at the sword,*

*"However, I know who was the one who had brought the sword to the* ***<< Church >>****. Well, rather, I'm supposed to tell the master of the sword about the one who had brought the sword --- according to what was written in the ancient text preserved with the sword."*

*"Horhh. So, who was it?"*

*And the Father replied.*

*"Tenshi."*[5]

*"Tenshi?"*

*"Yeah, it was the Tenshi."*

*The Father said.*

*On hearing those words, once again, Gekkou looked up at the stained glass of the church. As expected, on the glass was the drawing of the kneeling Saint Mary who was surrounded by flying angels.*

*And on top of that, the angels surrounding three learned men.*

*And the angels surrounding a baby that was born in the stable.*

*Basically, the angels were naked and were surrounding the humans with an insolent look on their faces.*

*Looking up at those insolent figures,*

*"Those Tenshi?"*

*At Gekkou's query, the Father looked up. And looked at the stained glass.*

*Looking at the figures of the angels, he shook his head,*

*"No, those are angels right? Even though I said 'Tenshi' in Japanese to you, we don't call the angels 'Tenshi'."*

*As he said something difficult to comprehend, Gekkou tilted his head.*

*"Then, what of earth is the 'Tenshi' you speak of?"*

*And the Father replied.*

*In a low voice,*

*"According to the ancient text, the servants of the Tenma."*

*He said.*

*On hearing that, Gekkou looked at the Father.*

*Tenma..... those words resounded in his head and seemed to strike a link. It wasn't really something strong. But for some reason, he became strangely uncomfortable. Not knowing why he felt that way himself, Gekkou grimaced at the unpleasant feeling.*

*Tenma --- this word was not foreign to him. It was a term used in both Buddhism and Hinduism.*

***M a a r a  H a p i y a s u*** *Demon King of the Sixth Heaven, Hajun.*[6]

*But,*

*"Isn't Tenma from Buddhism....."*

*Gekkou started, but was quickly interrupted by the Father.*

*"It probably didn't belong to any of those. This sword did not appear in the stories of those religions perceivable by humans. It's probably something a more vile nature."*

*He said.*

*And Gekkou looked at the sword once more.*

*He looked at the crescent-shaped bell-guard.*

*Indeed, this crescent shape, in a strange way, did not trigger any link with Buddhism or Hinduism. It was clear to him it had received the influence of something else altogether.*

*"Then what on earth is the Tenma?"*

*On hearing his query, the Father shrugged his shoulders.*

*"I wonder. The only opponent against which the sword will not be able to demonstrate its power..... is the servant of the Tenma, that is to say the Tenshi. So, if you ever confront a servant of the Tenma, watch out..... well, even though I said that..... it's not like it's a creature that you will meet everyday. Even after having lived for two hundred and forty years, I've yet see in person that monster known as the Tenshi."*

*He said.*

*On hearing that,*

*"Two hundred and forty years?"*

*Asked Gekkou, and a smile floated on the Father's face. And then,*

*"Now, my job is done. The curse will be lifted as well."*

*He said. With that, he looked down at the broken liquor bottle on the floor sadly,*

*"Well, I would have wanted to take a final drink of liquor but..... it's fine. Like what you said, even the bible says that alcohol is one of the roots of evil."*

*After saying that, he laughed. And with that, the skin of his face started to fester. Melting like a lit candle, his body festered, contorted, crumbled, and disappeared.*

*At the instant the Father disappeared, the scenery around him changed as well.*

*Just a moment ago, before him, was the inside of a church, where dazzling bright sunlight was streaming through the stained glass, but now, for some reason, he was standing inside a dark, rotten, dilapidated house.*

*A headless Saint Mary sculpture. Fallen stained glass on a cracked floor. A hole opening up in the roof as a result of the rot, and from there, vines and ivy of the dark forest in the night could be seen creeping into the decrepit building.*

Gekkou recalled that scene ---

"....."

In the student council room.

The scene in which the figure of the monster Father, who had lived for two hundred and forty years old, melting into nothingness like a candle.

*In the end, you didn't leave me any clue right?*, Gekkou wanted to retort stupidly.

However, it seemed like information about the enemy whom he had encountered in class eight could be found in the Father's words, he thought.

The words that talked about a certain monster which was the only type of monster
Spell Error **Wicked Blade** was ineffective against.

Regarding the Tenma and its servant.

"..... in other words....."

He murmured.

"The silver-haired fella I met today is a Tenshi....."

Following that, he took his cellphone from his pocket and contacted the **<< Military >>**. As before, in just two rings, a woman picked up the phone.

*"Yes."*

"It's me."

*"Yes."*

"There's something I need."

*"What will that be?"*

"Compile all the documents which contain the word 'Tenma'."

*"'Tenma', is that right?"*

"Yeah."

*"Understood."*

"Quickly get working if you understood."

*"Ye..."*

Before the acknowledge could be completed, Gekkou hung up. And once again, he turned towards the Mirai who was still having fun with the whiteboard.

"Hey Mirai."

"Huh?"

"Do you know anything about the Tenma?"

"Nope."

"I thought so."

For now, he found it even a bother to say the words, *This fella is useless as usual*.

Well, it was probably fine to leave the thinking of a countermeasure against the silver-haired monster until after the **<< Military >>** had sent him the documents related to the Tenma. There was nothing else he could do with the amount of information he had now.

So he moved his thoughts to the next matter on hand.

He moved his thoughts to the next matter, something which he least wanted to think about.

His little brother.

He moved his thoughts to the question on how his little brother had survived, and to the warning he had sent in a high and mighty way.

The main points of his warning were ---

*If you intend to keep the mad witch Saitohimea, then, beware of the encroachment from the **Moon**.....*

The part which bothered Gekkou most in the warning was the word *beware*.

It was as if there was real concern and worry in that word,

"....."

Gekkou was irritated. Even though that damn Hinata had been making fun of him all this while, and on top of that, he even attempted to send a demon to devour him,

"And now you're tell me to be careful? Laughable."

He muttered expressionlessly.

Thinking back on Hinata's grinning face, and trying to imagine the darkness of his twisted heart which could not be read off the very face of his which concealed it,

"..... what motive did he have to give me that warning?"

He pondered.

*Beware of the encroachment from the moon.*

The moon.

"..... the moon....."

After uttering that, he looked at pitch black sword leaning against the desk. He looked at the hilt of the sword. He looked at the hilt which was adorned with a crescent moon.

"..... moon. What on earth will the moon do?"

However, even after thinking through it, it was still impossible for him to understand what he did not know. It was impossible for him to follow after the thought process of Hinata, who was always several steps ahead of him.

Gekkou was again vexed. He stopped thinking for once and looked out the window.

The sky was clear. With not a single cloud in sight. The sun in the afternoon was a little too bright, and as a result of the brightness, his sleep-deprived body could still hold out.

Of course, on such a afternoon, there was no way one could see the moon.

The moon.

Encroachment of the moon.

Saitohimea.

Tenma.

The unfortunate double-headed crow.

After those incomprehensible keywords tossed and turned around in his head for a while, he said.

"..... damn. Let me get some sleep."

With that, once again, he leaned against his chair. And closed his eyes.

"Ah, Gekkou is taking an afternoon nap ~?"

On hearing Mirai's voice,

"No, I'm sleeping."

"Don't you want to go back?"

"Uhn? Yeah..... well, going back is fine as well....."

At that moment.

He opened his eyes in surprise. He opened his eyes in surprise as he felt the rays that were beating down on his exasperated face earlier become weak all of a sudden. And once again, he looked out the window.

Dark clouds from out of nowhere were beginning to cover the sun.

Just a moment ago, the sky was clear and there was not a single cloud in sight, but yet, the sky turned dark before he knew it.

Gekkou looked intently at the sky.

From beside him,

"Erm, you know ~. On the way back, erm ~, can we drop by the bookstore again? There's a manga I want....."

Said Mirai, who had quickly gotten addicted to manga ever since having come to this world, in a timid tone. Recently, she had acquired a tasteful choice of getting into Yokoyama Mitsuteru's sixty volumes of "Romance of The Three Kingdoms". *That idiot, where on the shelf can she keep that many volumes*, Gekkou thought, but,

"....."

Right now, he did not say anything.

He merely looked out the window, at the sky which was quickly filling up with clouds in an abnormal manner.

Following that, he turned his sight back to the inside of the student council room. He was looking at the wall which the chair he had sat on was facing. An ordinary, cheap-looking wall of a school, with nothing appearing out of the ordinary.

As he continued looking at the wall for a while, Mirai spoke.

"Oh, I just bought one the day before, so does that mean 'no'? But but, right now, I'm at the really awesome part where Sou-Sou had caught Kan-U you know."

"....."

"Well I mean, if you were to read it, I'm sure you will also find it real interestingggggggggggggg!"

"....."

"N-no.....?"

On hearing her words, Gekkou turned his sight to face Mirai. She had *pretty please!!*, pleading look on her face.

He looked at her lovely face. And then.

"Mirai."

He called her name.

"Hweh?"

"Come here for a while."

"Ahh..... geez, are you perhaps angry? Erm, I did take some money from your wallet, but it's just 800 yen you know? And I topped the rest with the pocket money I got from Gekkou....."

But, he ignored all that and stood up. He grabbed Mirai's shoulders and pulled her in. And his lips closed in on her cheek.

"Eh? Eh? What!?"

Shouted Mirai.

Following that, her face turned beet red. And she looked at him in surprise,

"Wah, wah wah wah, wh-why are you kissing me? Why are you kissing me!?"

She said. And she resisted just a little. She pushed her hands against Gekkou's chest, and with a frantic look on her face, she resisted just a little.

But, without being bothered by that, Gekkou pulled her close to his chest. And whispered into her ear,

"Shut up."

On hearing that, for some reason, Mirai had a troubled look on her face. She let go of the strength in her arms, which should have been greater than that of Gekkou, and shut her eyes.

She squeezed shut her eyes.

While Gekkou did not understand why she had to squeeze shut her eyes with an anxious look on her face, as expected, he was indifferent to all that. And with that, in one go, his lips pressed against the cheek of her face, and he said.

"..... I release your curse. Move as I direct you."

In that instant.

In the instant Gekkou's lips touched her cheek.

Mirai opened her eyes.

On top of that, the rubber-made hair band used to tie her hair into a ponytail sprung off, and her hair turned golden.

Flashes of lightning danced around her. Her eyes turning into a piercing golden as well, she returned to her original form.

The powers that should have been sealed by Spell Error **Wicked Blade** returned to her.

After taking a look at her body which was entirely sparkling with flashes of lightning, she looked at him,

"Huh, huuuh..... erm, erm, it wasn't just a kiss?"

She said something incomprehensible, but Gekkou pay no heed to it.

Or rather, right now, there was really no time to engage in meaningless talk.

After ascertaining that Mirai had returned to her demon form, once again, Gekkou looked at the wall in the student council room.

He looked at the concrete wall that was covered with only white paint.

And at that moment, the center of the white wall started distorting, turning into a mash-like form.

Something.

Something irregular, from another world, was attempting to infiltrate into this world.

Rather, that was really not something that uncommon. About twice a month, for some reason, from this **<< Holy Ground >>** which can connect to every single dimension, a dragon or a demon or a curse, from a dimension the **<< Holy Ground >>** unintentionally connects to, would come through.

Occasionally, it would open a **<< Way >>** which would allow monster of a really foul nature to come through --- resulting in a troublesome situation which not uncommon, but.

"....."

But, during the time when Gekkou stays in the student council room, this should not be possible.

As a student council president, Gekkou had given eight liters of his blood and formed a contract with the **<< Holy Ground >>**, which would allow him to supervise the management of the dimensional portals through here.

In other words, while Gekkou is in the student council room, because of his power, dimensional portals should not open up randomly and connect to other worlds without his knowledge.

"....."

Right now, before him, a rift that was not opened by him appeared.

Something from some world was attempting to enter this world.

The white wall warped, cracked, and started turning red as if it were stained with blood.

And then.

"..... the enemy is coming."

Said Gekkou.

On hearing that,

"Heh?"

Mirai said.

"From where?"

"From behind you."

"Hweh?"

As she said that, a hole opened up in the wall.

And from that opened hole, a hand extended out. A hand that was larger than the body of a person. No, whether it was accurate to call that a hand or not was another matter. With more than twenty fingers, and claws of a different color each extending from them. Embedded in the rotting, crumbling skin, were crawling earthworm-like things of a disgusting color that were squeaking.

Surprised at the abnormal looking monster, Mirai shouted.

"What the hell is that!?"

"Like hell I know."

"Did Gekkou summon it?"

"I'm not acquainted with anyone like that."

"Then, it's an enemy!?"

"That's right. Anyway, just kill it. Demonstrate your self-proclaimed upper-class demon's power."

As Gekkou ordered, the eyes of Mirai, who had returned to her original form, glittered with an air of confidence.

"Aye aye sir ~!"

And she clenched her fist. Lightning gathered in that fist. She lowered her body. And let her lightning run,

"Take thatttttttttttt!"

She struck the trespassing giant **Hand**.

Consequently, several fingers of the **Hand** flew off. Even though there was no cry of pain, it probably took damage nevertheless.

Looking at that,

"..... alright. Can you fend it off for a while?"

Gekkou asked.

A smile then floated on Mirai's face,

"Piece of cake ~"

She said, and this time round, her hair, which was spiked into something resembling lightning, thrust at the hand. And with her right foot which was lit by flashes of lightning, she severed a finger.

After nodding at that, Gekkou retrieved his sword from beside the desk. Following that, instead of facing the monster hand, he turned to look out the window of the student council room.

The sky was becoming much, much more darker. Even though it was not like it was raining, thick clouds had cut the sunlight off from reaching the school and the schoolyard.

And then.

"....."

And then, in a gap between the clouds.

He saw something strange.

A round glow,

"..... is that the moon?"

He muttered, and looked at the clock hanging on the wall of the student council room. It was only two in the afternoon.

It was not yet the time for the moon to rise.

"....."

It was not yet the time for that kind of sinister red moon to rise.

But, at that moment, he remembered again.

He remembered the warning which he just received from Hinata earlier again.

*--- if you intend to keep the mad witch, just beware of the encroachment from the* ***Moon****.*

On remembering those words,

"..... interesting."

Gekkou said as a smile floated on his face. Following that he drew the sword from his waist. And he turned to face the monster that Mirai was fighting,

"..... since Hinata said that it's impossible for me to keep Saitohimea, then isn't this the time to prove him wrong?"

He said.

With that, Gekkou looked straight at the monster hand. And he further looked intently at the dimensional rift from which the hand had come out. At the end of that hand, how abnormally large a body would the owner of that hand possess? And what kind of abnormal, unpleasant world would that monster be residing in?

Even though he had no idea at all,

"..... Mirai."

He said.

Without turning around, Mirai replied,

"W-wait. I finishing it off right now."

But, in response to that,

"Get lost. I don't have enough time. I'll kill it."

"Eh?"

Gekkou slipped past the Mirai who was turning around, and Gekkou swung his sword. Reacting to that, the fingers of the hand came assaulting him, but were all cut off by the swing of the sword. He mowed them down. And with that, he jumped, and

swung his sword down on the monster's wrist in mid-air. Spell Error **Wicked Blade** readily sliced through the wrist, but while it could sever the whole hand, its movements stopped halfway.

And then he said.

"..... exorcise, Spell Error **Wicked Blade**."

With that one sentence, everything ended.

A curse darker than the black color of the sword spread across the sword. And the curse spread to the wound of the monster's wrist, and encroached it. The color of the skin of the seemingly rotting hand, turned darker and darker. One of the earthworm-like bugs jumped off from the inside of the skin, bared its fangs and attempted to devour Gekkou, but,

"....."

But, he did not dodge. The reason was because, faster than the movements of the earthworm, the curse of Spell Error **Wicked Blade** had invaded the body of the earthworm.

The body of the earthworm that was attempting devour him turned black, and crumbled into ashes.

At that moment, the **Hand** of the monster that didn't know its place and had invaded the student council room also crumbled and dropped onto the floor.

After ascertaining that, Gekkou sheathed his sword back at his waist. And then he turned his sight to the rift that was forcibly opened in the wall,

"..... now, where on earth does this connect to?"

He said. And peeked into the rift. On the other side of the rift, it was red. A scenery that was red, red, red, like the color of blood, lay before him.

No, perhaps, it was the atmosphere that was red. It seemed a little dubious for this space to be able to sustain human life.

At that moment,

"Heyyyyyyyyy, why did you interfere! Just a little while more, in just a little while more, I would have finished it off as well!"

"Quiet."

"Whatttttttttt! I wanted to finish this fella off and ask you to reward me with a 'Romance of Three Kingdoms' anime DVD box set....."

"I'll buy it for you."

"Eh <3"

"If you'd be quiet, I'll buy anything for you, so keep shut up."

He said.

"Alright!"

After giving an extremely predictable reply, Mirai kept quiet immediately. And with that, with a pair of sparkling golden eyes, she held her mouth with both hands, *I'm keeping quiet!*, she appeared to be demonstrating to Gekkou.

Of course, Gekkou ignored that and continued inspecting the scenery on the side of the rift. He took out a straw figure the size of his little finger from the pocket of his pants, and tossed it through the hole. The straw figure rolled along and landed at a location which appeared to be some deep red soil.

And nothing happened.

"....."

The straw figure was neither ripped apart nor broken into pieces.

By the way, if that straw figure were to be thrown into a place which could not sustain human life, it would let out an ear-splitting shriek and explode,

"..... somehow, it seems like humans can remain active in that space."

After saying that, he poked his head through the rift. And looked at the surroundings. After ascertaining that there were no other enemies, he withdrew his head back into the student council room.

And looked out the window.

The sky was still dark and the moon was out.

A deep red moon.

A deep red moon, that was of the same color as the other side of the rift in the wall.

"..... beware of the encroachment from the moon, he said....."

*Is he talking about this?*

Once again, he looked into the rift.

And Mirai asked,

"The moon? Is this connected to the moon?"

"I wonder."

"But the other side of this hole is totally red right?"

"Yeah."

"Uh, is the moon red?"

On hearing that, Gekkou replied.

"..... as far as I know, it's not..... well, let's go take a look. At any rate, it seems like the other side is inviting us."

On saying that, he took a step forward.

But at that moment, the cellphone in his pocket started vibrating.

"..... huh?"

Gekkou took out the phone. Opened it. On the display screen was the map of the school. And on that map, at a certain location, there was a green 'X' flashing on it.

At that juncture,

"..... what's wrong Gekkou. Let's go to the moon already."

Said Mirai.

But Gekkou did not look at Mirai. While staring at the flashing green 'X' on the map of the school,

"..... shit, this is bad."

He said.

"Bad?"

"Yeah."

"What is?"

At that question,

"Someone broke through the school barrier....."

As Gekkou said that, suddenly, *Gaaaaaaaaaa*, a thunder-like noise seemed to ring out near him.

But, it was not due to thunder.

Once again, *Gaaaaaaaaa*, a thunderous noise resembling that of real thunder, which seemed to shake the entire school, rang out.

But, that was indeed not due to thunder.

In response to that,

"....."

Once again, Gekkou's sight fell onto screen of the phone where the map of the school was displayed. And then,

Ascertained the location of the green 'X'. That was at the edge of the schoolyard. At the edge of the schoolyard where a large conspicuous camphor tree was standing.

He turned his sight in that direction. And looked at the outside of the school from the window of the student council room.

Before he knew it, rain had started pouring outside. Patter, patter, patter, bit by bit, the rain dirtied the schoolyard, dirtied the camphor tree, and before long, it started falling like a waterfall. The rain was red. Red like the blood. No, perhaps, it was really raining blood.

Gekkou looked intently at the red rain, then looked up at the sky. However, the red moon which he caught sight of just now was hidden away and no longer visible.

But, he knew. He knew that the moon was behind the clouds. He knew that the annoying red moon was behind those clouds.

*Beware of the encroachment of the Moon.....*

He remembered those words again, and on top of that, after having dealt with the incident which began since morning, he had yet to catch up on his sleep and he grimaced at the thought of that,

"..... today is an unlucky day."

Gekkou said. Then he turned on his heel. And was about to step out of the student council room. In order to repair the broken barrier, he wanted to head out to the schoolyard.

However, just when he had taken two steps, his body stopped. Suddenly, as he realized that something had grabbed hold of his neck, he stopped moving.

"Huh?"

Gekkou looked at his own neck. Before he knew it, there were several tube-like things coiled around his neck. Drenched in a red fluid, the tube-like things were coiled around his neck.

Gekkou looked at them.

He looked at the disgusting, red tube-like things resembling a human's innards that were wrapped around his neck. Like the **Hand** monster earlier, they had entered the room through the rift.

"Enemies again....."

As he said that, with a tremendous strength, the red tubes tugged Gekkou towards the rift. With his neck constricted,

"Tch."

Gekkou clicked his tongue. And he tried to draw his sword. In order to sever the tubes, he tried to draw his sword. However, the hand which he was using to draw his sword was bounded by the tubes as well. He was hauled. He was hauled with a tremendous strength.

And consequently, as a result of the strong haul, Gekkou's body was in the air.

"Drat."

He groaned.

"Uwah, Gekkou is flying!"

Mirai exclaimed in surprise.

Looking in the direction of Mirai, Gekkou said,

"I'm being hauled away. Do something!"

He stretched out the hand that was not bounded by the tubes.

And then,

"Got got got, got it!"

She tried to grab hold of Gekkou's hand. Resisting the pull of the tubes, Gekkou seemed to be able to make it.

But, at that moment, Gekkou considered.

"....."

*What if, in fighting the pull of the tubes, Mirai, with her idiotic strength, pulls hard on my arm, then wouldn't my arm get torn off?*

He realized.

And at that moment,

"I, I'm coming to save you now, Gekkou!"

As the hand of Mirai, who had a desperate look on her face, came to grab hold of his arm,

"No, as I thought, I don't need your help."

After saying that, he struck her hand with all his might. With that,

"Ehhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh ~!?"

He grabbed hold of the hair of the surprised Mirai, and pulled.

"Ow ow ouchhhhh, ugh, what? What? What are you....."

"I'm bringing you along."

"Ehhhhhhhhhh ~"

"To the moon with me....."

At that moment, both Gekkou and Mirai were readily pulled through the rift, to the other side ---

And they disappeared from the student council room.

# The Moon Falls

Fifteen minutes before that.

Shigure Haruka was walking along the road used for commuting to school.

Due to the sudden emergency evacuation drill, she was separated from Taito,

"..... I wonder whether Taito ate my bento."

She murmured and looked up at the sky.

*You're thinking about this!*, the clear sky seemed to be saying to her.

In the morning's weather forecast, *today's weather will be clear and is the perfect day for laundry*, the weather lady had said, and then, *well, won't it be nice to have bento with Taito at the veranda of the classroom*, she had thought, and with that, she really got into it while she was making the bento.

"....."

She looked up at the cloudless sky and sighed. But thinking that sighing would just make the rest of the day boring, she quickly 'corrected' herself and a smile floated on her face.

"Nii"

She said, and her whole face widened into a smile.

As she grinned, a neighborhood auntie whom she knew came walking towards her,

"Oh hi, Haruka-chan, you certainly look happy. Did something good happen?"

She said.

As her 'smiling' practice was seen by someone, on reflex, her face flushed, and she replied,

"Ah, good afternoon, Sakai-san."

"Good afternoon, Haruka-chan, are you already going home?"

"Yes. Somehow, today, during noon break, there was a surprise emergency evacuation drill, and we get to go home early."

"Oh, is that so? Then, our Satomi might have also reached home. I don't allow her to bring a house key with her, so I better hurry back home."

On hearing that, Haruka smiled.

"Why don't I give Satomi a call?"

"Will you?"

Haruka nodded and took out her cellphone from her bag. She scrolled to 'Sa' and pressed on Satomi's entry. *Ring*, *ring*, *ring*, after a few rings, a *We're unable to connect to the number you're dialing* message was heard,

"Huh, she didn't pick up. Maybe, her battery ran out."

Haruka said.

"That's terrible."

Sakai-san said.

"Perhaps, she's waiting at the door now."

"The school has ended for some time, so perhaps she is."

"Then I better get back."

"Okay."

"Haruka-chan, you aren't going back yet?"

Sakai-san said.

On hearing that, Haruka smiled.

"There's a place I need to go first."

"Oh, are you going to cram school? I heard from Satomi that everyone seems to be going there these days."

"....."

"Just as I thought, everyone is attending cram school since freshman year perhaps. Well, since you are good at studying, you're probably going to a good cram school right..... Satomi on the other hand. Oops, this is not the time for a long talk. See you, Haruka-chan, bye."

"Goodbye."

Haruka nodded with a smiling face.

"Tell me more about cram school next time okay?"

"Okay."

"Alright, see you."

"See you too, Sakai-san."

Haruka bowed, and Sakai-san waved and then left. While she looked at her disappearing back,

"..... what should I do. I haven't attended any cram school yet....."

She said, and then, *oh well*, she thought and started walking again.

For some reason, she was walking back towards the school.

She passed through the commercial district, crossed the pedestrian crossing, and walked along the school fence for a while.

And then.

"....."

And then, and before her, on the other side of the fence, was a large, luxuriant camphor tree. It was a large tree standing at the corner of Miyasaka High's schoolyard.

Haruka came to a stop right in front of the tree. And looked up at the tree. She looked up at the large tree.

And then,

"Camphor-san, good afternoon."

She said while smiling.

Of course, the tree did not reply, but she could feel it. Each time she looked at the tree, she could feel it. Each time she looked at the large, aged tree, she could feel its gentle, but yet strong, comforting presence.

Whenever she looked at that large, warm tree, her mood became joyful.

Looking up at the camphor tree, Haruka said.

"Thanks for continually protecting this school."

She said.

"But, just for today..... just for a little while, can you hold your power back?"

She said.

And her face became a little sad. Her hand reached into her bag, and took out something. But that was, was not visible to the human eye. No, even she herself could not see the thing she was grasping tightly and had taken out of the bag. And then she threw it through the fence. She threw it through the fence, as if to strike that something against that camphor tree.

And she said.

"..... now, Black Magic **P o i s o n** , invoke."

In the instant she said that.

Beyond the fence.

It was clear to her that the atmosphere in the school had changed.

It was clear to her that the camphor tree was screaming in anguish.

A very loud, agonizing scream.

It was clear to her that a thunderous scream, as if it were the thunder itself, had rang out in the school.

But that screaming voice could not be heard on her side.

Outside the school, outside the fence, it was not audible.

And then.

"..... I'm sorry."

Haruka said once more.

"..... I'm really sorry."

And she ---

# And Then The Tenma Is Sung ---

And the time shifts back to the present part of the story.

Almost getting killed by the red rain that had started falling on the rooftop all of a sudden, in a frantic manner, for now, Taito was heading towards the student council room, to ask the irritating Gekkou on what was actually happening here.

He descended the stairs swiftly, and ran along the corridor. As he was running, he took his cellphone out from his pocket, in order to ascertain the current time.

It was now twenty three minutes past two.

However, just a while ago, two minutes ago to be precise, he had wasted four of his lives, and so, erm. In any case, within the next thirteen minutes, he should only be able to die two more times.

But, if fifteen minutes had gone by since the beginning, meaning after 2.36 pm, he would be able to die another six times --- after ascertaining that in his mind,

"..... alright, for now, until 2.36 pm, I shall be careful and endeavor not to die even once."

As he said that, he put his cellphone back into his pocket. And he turned his head around. To make sure that Himea was indeed following behind him.

As he did that, Himea smiled.

"What's up?"

"Erm no, I was just making sure that you're right behind me."

"Ah-ha, you're worrying about me <3. You're thoughtful as always."

After saying that, she clung to his arm.

By the way.

Taito was running with almost full exertion of his energy, and Himea was following lightly, right behind him.

Even though Taito was anything but slow in his pace, for some reason, she was following right behind him lightly, at a jogging pace,

"..... hey Himea, aren't you really fast on your feet?"

On his query, with a look that seemed to be saying that the question was but a trivial one, she said.

"It's because I'm using my magic."

"I see. A magic that increases your running speed?"

"Nope. A magic that follows behind a moving object. That's why I'm being pulled along by you instead of actually running you know?"

"You're not running?"

"Yup. Look at my feet."

As she said that, he looked down at her feet, and indeed, even though both her right and left slender legs which extended out from her skirt seemed to be moving in a running fashion, for some reason, her feet, despite being very close to the ground, were not touching the ground at all.

On seeing that,

"It's true."

"You see? That's why I'm quite surprised at how fast your legs are. This is probably, already..... at a speed that is beyond that of a human."

As she said that, a *snap* sound could be heard from his leg. And following that, an excruciating pain ran along his leg.

His tendon had snapped.

As a result of him running hard with all his might for too long, his tendon gave way and snapped from the extreme fatigue.

However, it reattached itself immediately. Thanks to the time-conditional immortality power granted by Himea, his wounds healed up readily.

As his fatigue disappeared completely, he further went on to increase his speed. And ran along the corridor at a slightly faster speed.

Looking at Taito, Himea said happily.

"It seems like you're mostly used to that body. Didn't I tell you? You'll become strong."

"Only my legs have gotten faster."

"Along the way, it will be more than that, don't fret, don't fret."

As she said that, she turned her sight to the side. She turned her sight towards the classrooms. Beyond the classrooms. She turned her sight to look out the windows of the classrooms.

Following her gaze, Taito looked out as well.

Of course, as he was running past classrooms one after another, the scenery outside was hardly visible to him, but, it was enough just to be able to catch a glimpse for an instant.

"....."

That was how unpleasant the scenery outside the window looked like.

Compared to the scenery viewed from the rooftop earlier, this was completely different, and was much more like a horror setting.

Even though it was still afternoon, the sky was completely covered with dark clouds. The sunlight was completely cut off and the school yard was dark like the deep night.

And in that school yard that was dark like the deep night, blood red rain was still falling. Red rain that could kill off a human being readily was still falling. And from somewhere, outside the windows, he could hear high-pitched noises that seemed to come from insects. *Kichi kichi kichi*, *kachi kachi kachi*, like the biting sounds of insects. While he didn't know what it was, in any case, without a doubt,

"..... something is there right?"

As Taito said that, Himea acknowledged.

"Yeah."

"Seems to be something awfully dangerous right?"

"Yeah."

"Is it an enemy?"

".....I'm not sure. But....."

On hearing her words,

"Ah, well, I've already been killed four times right? It's clearly hostile."

Said Taito.

But, in response,

"....."

For some reason, Himea did not answer.

She shut her eyes, appearing to be thinking about something; *Isn't it dangerous to close her eyes while she's running*, he thought, but, *well, since Himea is not human, she should be fine, I guess*, he thought.

And at that moment, he turned around a bend in the corridor. As he did so, Himea followed along even with her eyes closed; *ah, she's truly using magic to follow after me*,

"Then, even with her eyes closed, it should be ok."

He felt more settled at that thought.

And with that, he quickened his pace.

Hurrying towards the student council room.

The truth was if he didn't hurry, the situation would become pretty awful, it seemed.

Since clearly, the schoolyard had become a horror setting. A red moon had appeared, with red rain falling, and on top of that, from the *kachi kachi* sounds in the schoolyard, something would be entering the school in a moment.

If he didn't hurry now, when else would he hurry?

"Jeez, thank god there are no other students....."

But, at that moment, suddenly.

All the lights of the school that had been turned on until now went out at the same time. His eyes plunged into darkness in a single breath, and frantically, Taito came to a halt. Almost tumbling forward, he stopped himself by braking his hand against the wall.

He was already right before the stairs that were descending one level down to the fifth floor, and from there, the west premises of the school, he could make his way to the student council room at the central premises of the school and get to where Gekkou would be.

"....."

However, without moving, Taito squinted his eyes. And he opened his eyes wide as much as he could, and, *quickly get used to the darkness, get used to it, get used*

*to it*, he muttered in his mind. And earlier than expected, his eyes got used to the darkness and he surveyed the scene before him.

Within the unpleasantly dark school premises, despite the fact that it was not even three o'clock yet.

He was now on the corridor of the sixth floor, where the AV room, the playroom, and the music room were situated. Right at the end of the corridor. Just a little further, he would be at the staircase which would lead him to the fifth floor.

Taito turned his sight in the direction of those stairs. The stairs were terribly dark. The very faint light that was streaming in through the windows of the classroom did not manage to reach the stairs, and it was really very dark to the point where he could make out almost nothing at all.

And from below the dark staircase, he could out make some faint noises. He could make out some strange noises. And he stretched his ears. As he did that, bit by bit, it seemed like the strange noises were getting closer.

"....."

*Kachi kachi*, they were soft but he could hear them. *Kachi kachi, kachi*, the noises that resembled the sounds of biting insects were coming up from the deeper part of the darkness that was shrouding the stairs.

On hearing that,

"..... damn."

Said Taito.

"Something's coming."

Said Taito.

"What should we do? If we don't take this stairs, we won't be able to reach the student council room though..... will we able to fight it off?"

After saying that,

"What do you think? Himea."

He turned his head around. He turned around to look at the figure of the girl who should be right behind him with her 'following' magic.

However.

"..... huh, Himea?"

For some reason, Himea, who should have been right behind him, was not there.

"Hey, Himea, where did you go?"

Even as he called out to her, there was no reply.

The only thing he could see were the dim rays of light that had passed through the gaps of the doors of various classrooms along the dark corridor.

"Crap, you're kidding me right. I lost her."

He panicked, and started making his way back to the corridor. And peered into the first classroom. But, she was not inside the music room. And he ran on further. And peered into the playroom. But she was not there.

And at that moment,

< Here, idiot. >

A voice sounded. A strangely high-pitched voice which he, as far as he could remember, had never heard of, sounded.

It came from in front of the AV room.

As Taito turned his sight to look in that direction, down the corridor was Himea, lying on the ground. Congregating around her body was a red jelly-like substance,

"Himea!?"

Yelled Taito. And he was about to rush up to her.

However,

"..... don't, don't come over!"

Himea said. For some reason, she sounded as if she was on the verge of crying, and without looking up at him, she had told him not to come near her.

But Taito did not stop.

"I'm coming."

"No."

"I'm coming now."

"Please don't come. I....."

She said it with an agonizing voice. On the verge of tears, lying there, in an agonizing voice that sounded as if she were dying,

"..... I don't want you to see me..... like this....."

She said.

For an instant, he almost halted. From hearing that desperation in her voice, he almost halted in his tracks.

However,

"I'm coming to save you now."

Said Taito.

She was in great agony. She was lying on the floor, crying out with a voice that sounded as if she were dying. On top of that, she appeared to be assaulted by a jelly monster.

There was no way he would not go save her.

That's why Taito ran.

"..... no..... no..... no."

As Himea continued muttering, Taito ran towards her.

"Don't, don't, don't....."

As Himea called out in a shaking, teary voice, he ran towards her. And then he could hear her voice. As if she were talking incoherently, he could hear her voice.

"..... it can't be..... I don't want this..... I don't want to, to turn back, so early..... after all this while, I've finally met up with Taito, but yet..... I don't want to be separated..... from Taito anymore....."

At that moment.

"Himea!"

Taito yelled.

And he reached her side. Following that, he kicked away the red jelly that was covering her, and helped her up.

And at that instant, Himea suddenly looked up. And she looked at Taito. With a face that had a beauty not existing in this world, she looked at Taito.

But.

"....."

Taito was surprised by the sight of her face.

Because, for some reason, there was not a single tinge of white in the iris of her usually mischievous eyes. As if they were covered in paint, every single part of what one would call the eye in human anatomy was smeared completely with red.

Totally red eyes.

Red eyes like those of a rabbit.

And then, she thrust out her hand. Her hand came outstretched towards the chest of the Taito who was helping her up.

And then.

A stabbing sound was heard from his chest. And Taito shifted his gaze to his chest. Looking at his own chest. Himea's slender hand was piercing through his chest, and had pulverized his heart.

"..... why....."

He murmured.

And with that, he could feel his mind blanking out. He could feel his bodily functions stop as a result of his heart getting destroyed. His knees bent, and he fell to the floor.

In exchange, Himea stood up. He could see his fluttering skirt. Her slender legs were standing on top of the red jelly.

And then.

< Ah~ >

She said. It was a high-pitched voice that was difficult to make out, the voice which he had heard earlier.

And once again,

< Ahh >

She spoke. The pitch of her voice became a little lower. And it became easier to make out. While Himea was speaking in her low voice, for some reason, it sounded like a completely different person.

And then, once again, *ahh*, she changed the pitch of her voice,

< Something like this I think..... >

She said.

At that moment, she was already using a voice that was very much different from Himea. Expression. And her atmosphere as well.

That Himea who was not like Himea looked down at him. Her face looked down at him.

And then,

< ..... hah, for the sake of this. For the sake of this worthless human, Saithohimea is willing to throw her life away..... >

She said.

< ..... answer me, Saitohimea. For the sake of such trash, you chose to abandon me? >

At that moment, he could feel his heart regenerating. He could feel it regenerating slowly. But, he still couldn't move. He couldn't move right away.

In the meantime, as if she were querying someone, Himea continued speaking.

< Answer me, Saitohimea. You broke your contract with me, and fell in love with such a man? >

She said angrily. With both her hands spread out, she said angrily.

His heart finished regenerating. The only thing left was to wait for the hole in his chest to close up, but, it was not like he needed the hole to close up before he could move. Though it was painful, he could move. That's why Taito sat up. And looked up at her.

He looked up at the Himea who had eyes red like a rabbit.

Looking intently at her,

"..... what on earth has happened?"

Asked Taito.

Himea then turned her gaze onto him. And smiled. A smile that was so dark and cold which he would never have thought that she would ever have spread across her face,

< None of your business..... >

As she said that, she waved her hand. And then, a large mass of the same red jelly that was covering the ground sprang forth from her hand. And it struck the upper body of Taito. And his body started to dissolve. His skin and muscles dissolved, showing his bones. And those bones dissolved as well, sending waves of excruciating pain to assault him.

He wanted to scream out in agony, but the mouth and throat which he would use to scream dissolved as well, and Taito disappeared. His consciousness and his upper body; and he could see no more.

"....."

And once again, regeneration started.

"Uwah....."

As he groaned from the intense pain which had assaulted him, he regenerated.

And before him, Himea was smiling. She was smiling delightedly. Looking intently at him,

< Now, that makes it six times you've died right? If I kill you just one more time, you won't come back to life..... >

As she was saying that,

"Stop..... Bahlskra."

This time round, her real voice sounded from her mouth. And Taito's eyes widened,

"Himea!?"

He shouted. And her face relaxed. On the face which looked like a completely different person just a while ago, a gentle smile surfaced,

"Ta-Taito..... hang on for a little while. I'll suppress **Him** now....."

She said.

*To suppress **Him**,* in other words,

".....your body got taken over by Bahlskra?"

Taito asked.

Bahlskra.

<< V a m p i r e **Most Ancient Sorcerer** >> Bahlskra.

He had heard of that name before. Gekkou had mentioned that he was formerly Himea's comrade and was a criminal wanted at the international level. At any rate, he created some kind of tremendously dangerous magic which would throw the world into chaos, and was feared by the world, but, Himea had somehow sealed him up some way or another, well, something along those lines as far as he could remember.

And, that dangerous << V a m p i r e **Most Ancient Sorcerer** >> who should have been sealed up was here right now, and for some reason, had taken over Himea's body.

Looking at that scene before him,

"....."

*Terrible*, Taito thought. So as to speak, *if this were a game, wouldn't Bahlskra be the last boss?*, he thought.

Even that insanely strong Hinata had hunted Himea for the purpose of reviving that Bahlskra.

On top of that, Himea had called those people who wanted to revive Bahlskra mad worshipers of the Demon God.

Mad worshipers of the Demon God.

Demon God worshipers.

Demon God.

*Demon God, wait, doesn't that make him a god!?*

Taito grimaced.

Looking intently at the Himea who was in agony, he said.

"What should I do? What should I do to purge Bahlskra away from Himea's body?"

He asked.

And Himea replied. No, that's not it. Himea replied with the voice of Bahlskra. Glaring at Taito,

< ..... purge me? I've taken over her body? Ha, haha, don't shit with me. Weren't you the one who had taken over her heart? Weren't you the one who had stolen her body, human? The truth is, she is my thing. The beautiful Saitohimea belongs only to me. That's why I'm taking her along. To the world which you can't reach. A place which you definitely can't reach, to our **<< Paradise >>**. >

After saying that, she(he) put her hand forward. And from that hand, a mass of red jelly formed.

But, at that moment.

"N-no."

Himea's voice said. And flung her hand away from Taito, firing the jelly in the process. The wall of the classroom dissolved into nothingness in an instant.

Taito looked at that. And grimaced.

If it had hit him, he would die for sure this time.

He had already died a total of six times within a span of fifteen minutes. If he were to die again, he would not return to life anymore.

Himea said.

"..... Ta-Taito..... get out of here..... I'll..... I'll suppress him so use the time to..... get away....."

She said.

But.

"....."

But, in this situation, even when he was told to run away, there was no way he could do that all by himself.

Taito looked intently at her,

"Damn, what the hell should I do?"

He muttered.

Following that, he looked around him and in a loud voice,

"Hey Gekkou! The school has turned into a mess now, so what the hell are you doing!"

He yelled.

But, as he thought, there was no reply.

There was no sign of that irritating, but yet somewhat reliable when it comes to such urgent circumstances, student council president coming to help them.

And in the meantime, right before him, Himea's body was taken over by some mysterious fella. And on top of that, he seemed to possess some tremendous power and was the verge of killing Taito.

And Himea said it again. *Get out of here*, she said. *To the shitty me who isn't of any use, get out of here, she said.*

But nine years ago, he didn't run away.

*I'm coming to save you*, the Taito then had shouted to the abducted Himea and had gotten up again. Though he couldn't land a single hit, but even so, he got up in desperation to protect Himea.

The end was a bad one though.

But, even so, during that time, he had stood up in an attempt to protect her.

But, this time round, he could not even do that.

The monster called Bahlskra, had somehow taken over her body.

Using her mouth to speak, and using her hand to kill Taito. In other words, if Taito were to attack him, it would mean that he would be attacking Himea as well. As he thought about that,

"Ahh, damn."

He said.

"What should I do about this?"

He groaned.

And in response to that,

"Quic.....kly..... ahh, no..... I can't hold him back any longer..... quickly..... get out of here....."

But, Taito shook his head.

"No way."

He said.

"If..... if I run away now, then won't it be like nine years ago, where Himea was taken away from me? If so, I can't run away by myself. Even though right now, I have no idea what is happening and can't do anything yet, I'll figure something out..... I'll do my best and figure something out, so wait for a little while."

He said. Following that, he took out his cellphone from his pocket. He scrolled to 'I', to 'Irritating Kurenai Gekkou', and called. After two, three rings, it switched to voice mail mode ---

"Damn that fella, he's useless during such critical moments."

Yelled Taito.

And at that moment, Himea pointed her(his) hand in his direction.

< The one who's useless is you. Time to die. >

She(He) said.

But, at that juncture, her face contorted, seemingly about to cry.

"N-no....."

She said in a pained, shaking voice. And moved her hand towards another direction. The red jelly was fired off in another direction again, and the ceiling dissolved.

And then.

"..... pl-please..... please, Taito..... listen to me..... I can't..... I can't hold out, any longer..... I don't want you to die. If you die..... if you die, I'll....."

At that moment, her words stopped. Without any more strength left to talk, she shivered, and stopped. Her eyes were overflowing with tears. Her eyes that were red like a rabbit were overflowing with tears.

The tears were red. Red like the blood.

Taito looked at those tears. He looked at her tears. He had made her cry. Like a dead-weight unable to do anything, he had made her cry.

Looking at that.

"Damn."

He groaned.

"Damn, what the hell is with me? Like always, why can't I do anything?"

He groaned.

He was exasperated at his lack of power. Even when there was a girl crying right before him. Even when she was crying and wanted to be saved, he could only be exasperated at his own idiocy and ignorance at what was happening.

He could only be exasperated at his own weakness, at his own reliance and hope in that Gekkou or someone else would come and help them.

And then, he would once again lose something precious to him.

Forgetting about how a crying girl got abducted by a monster, how he was hollering then, and living his life like an idiot, laughing everyday.

"....."

Smiling, laughing, not knowing what he wanted to do, living every day in a boring way for the past nine years; he remembered those days.

He remembered those nine years in which he had forgotten something important to him like an idiot.

And then.

"..... I don't want that to happen again."

Taito murmured softly.

And then in his mind, *if that's the case, what should I do?*, he muttered. *Use my head. Previously, I only tried to rush Hinata like an idiot. Not understanding how powerless I was, I only hollered 'I'm going to save you'. But this time, I can't afford to do that anymore. Even if I lack the power, even if the enemy is far stronger than me, I can't afford to lose.*

*I can't afford to have that same regret another time.*

"....."

*Then, what should I do?*

*Use my head. Even if I have absolutely no idea as to what's happening, use my head. Use my head. Use my head. Use, my head!?*

*What on earth should I.....*

"What should I do..... to protect Himea?"

He said.

"Tell me how. I don't know how since I'm an idiot. But if you would tell me how, I'll do it..... so tell me what I should do to save you, Himea?"

Taito asked Himea.

On hearing that, she(he) smiled.

< If you die..... >

"I'm not asking you!"

Taito yelled.

She(He) raised her hand towards him again. Red jelly was formed and launched towards him. This time round, Himea could not protect him. Seemingly having lost her strength, she could not protect him.

"Damn."

As Taito groaned, somehow, he dodged it. The jelly readily dissolved the door of the classroom. If he got struck by that, he would have died without a doubt.

While he stayed wary of her hand,

"Himea!"

He hollered.

"Can you hear me, Himea. I'll protect you, so answer me. What should I do? What should I do to save you? What on earth should I do to protect you....."

But, his words were interrupted,

< Ha, haha, what the hell. What the hell's with that. Save her? You say you want to save her? Isn't the real culprit who had broken her you? >

She(He) said.

And with that, she(he) put her(his) hand out again. Red jelly formed. This time round, a massive amount of jelly, as much as what was covering the corridor, formed and was fired.

Taito dived into the AV room, and evaded it. The jelly engulfed half the classroom, dissolved it, and it became connected to the neighboring playroom.

But, Bahlskra did not slow down in his attacks. She(he) put her(his) hand out. Red jelly formed. And she(he) looked at Taito,

< That's why I will never forgive you, Kurogane Taito. For an ugly human..... for a lowly worm only fit for crawling on the ground..... I won't forgive you, the one she loves. >

"As I was saying, I'm not talking to you! Himea, answer me please."

< There's no need to answer you. There's no need for her to answer trash like you. >

"Shut up."

< The one who should shut up is you, Kurogane Taito. The truth is, she is a perfect existence that should have no weakness which I can take advantage of. A perfect existence that even the **<< Tenma >>** is afraid of..... >

"I say shut up....."

< But yet, you broke her. You made her become strange. In order to bring the useless you back to life after you died seven times, she..... she paid the price with most of her life..... >

Bahlskra said.

On hearing those words.

"....."

Taito remained silent.

On hearing Bahlskra's words, Taito had nothing to say in response.

Rather, he was not quite able to make sense of what Bahlskra just said.

But, her(his) words continued. From the lovely pink lips of Himea, his words continued.

< Such a useless you want to protect her? Save her? Don't make me laugh. Don't make me laugh. Don't make me laugh. Aren't the one who killed her? Aren't you the one who broke her? Because of her love for you, she went crazy and chose death. Already, much of her life is spent. It's all because of your fault, that she does not have much time left to live. >

She(he) said.

On hearing that,

"..... huh? Wa-wait a minute."

He said.

"What do you mean? Not much time left to live? What on earth....."

However, with a pained expression,

".....don't listen to him..... Taito."

She said.

"There's no reason for you to listen to him....."

However, she was interrupted by Bahlskra.

< Don't be a fool. Why don't you tell him? Why don't you tell him the truth? Why do you have to be the only one suffering? I too, I too don't wish to see your cry..... >

"Shut, up, Bahlskra..... my life is for..... me to decide....."

< Don't shit with me. Isn't it because of this human's fault that you don't have much time left! The **<< Tenma >>** is coming. The **<< Tenma >>** is coming to violate you, who have lost your powers. If that were to happen, everything will end. Since you have lost your powers, there's no way you can defend yourself. You'll need my hel..... >

"I don't need your help..... if I can just stay by Taito's side and laugh with him..... that alone will be enough..... that's why I just want to be with him a little longer, and after that..... after that, I shall disappear."

She said.

When she said 'I shall disappear', she had a sad, resigned, but yet a little happy look on her face.

On hearing that, Taito's face contorted and he looked intently at her.

He looked intently at her face, where the red tears were still flowing.

And he started thinking about the meaning of what she had just said.

"....."

Of course, he was not able to make complete sense of the conversation that had taken place between Bahlskra and Himea.

*What is the Tenma?*

*What is it that's making Bahlskra so panicked?*

*What is the relationship between the two of them?*

He couldn't make head or tail of those matters.

But, there were also things he understood. There were also things he understood from their conversation.

And that was, for some reason, Himea had thrown away her life for him.

For the sake of a human who could not do anything, she had thrown away her life stupidly.

Thinking about that,

"....."

*What the hell*, he thought. *What the hell is with that*, he thought.

*During the time when that Hinata was rampaging at the park, didn't I throw away my life in trying to save her?*

*Didn't I throw away my life with the thought of letting her live a life without tears, after all the pain she had gone through for the past nine years?*

*But yet, the result is this?*

He didn't manage to protect her nine years ago as well.

And even after those nine years, he had made her cry like this. And even took her life away.

And there was not much time left for her to live.

For some reason he was not aware of, before he knew it, there was not much time left for her to live.

Even when he had thought they could be together forever. She had been imprisoned for nine whole years, and on top of that, Taito had forgotten about that. But, at last, even though they could return to the old days. Defeating Hinata, saving her, at last, he thought that bit by bit, she could recapture the time she had lost; even though that was what he had thought.

But yet.

"....."

But yet, there was not much time for her to live.

*For my sake.*

*Because she chose to bring the useless me back to life, there is not much time for her to live.*

But yet, every day, she was smiling happily.

*I love you, Taito*, she would murmured while smiling happily.

*Just by being with you makes me happy*, she would say while smiling happily.

*Croquette bread tastes good*, she would say. *When I'm eating with Taito, everything tastes good*, she would say. *It's really fun not to be alone anymore*, she would say. *I want to be with you forever. I want to be with Taito forever*, she would say while smiling.

Even though the truth was that there was not much time left for her. Even though she knew that there not much time left for her to live, she had smiled happily at Taito and told him she wanted to be with him forever.

To be with him forever.....

"....."

*Was it okay for me to make merry about being able to coming back to life without knowing all that? Was it okay for me to laugh like an idiot, thinking about how great it was for her to enjoy herself in naivety, and that little by little, the school life she was leading would heal her wounds?*

*Such things.*

"..... only qualify me as trash....."

Taito said.

Bahlskra then looked at him intently with eyes full of hatred,

< It's too late to only notice it now..... you have defiled her too much. >

Taito had nothing to say to those words.

< You can't protect her. >

Taito had nothing to say to those words.

< That's why I'm requesting you. To just disappear. And never to lead her astray again. >

Taito, as one would expect, had nothing to say to those words.

Because it was true that he could not protect her.

Because it was true that he was too weak and powerless and unable to protect her during critical moments. And to top it off, the worst thing was when he didn't even realize that she was shouldering such pain. He did not even realize that she had been crying.

*What can a trash like me protect?*

Taito thought. He thought from the bottom of his heart. He thought in exasperation.

But, at that moment, Himea gazed at him,

"..... Taito."

She said. He looked at her. She was indeed smiling. In pain, sadness, but also in a little delight,

"..... don't make such a face, Taito. You have been..... protecting me all along....."

She said.

On hearing that, Taito said,

"But....."

But she cut him off,

"It's true..... since I had always been shrouded in loneliness and had felt like dying..... but you found me. You found me in that park..... and protected me from that loneliness. So, Taito, don't make such a face. Taito will always be able to protect....."

< Enough of that, shut up, Saitohimea. I'll be the one to..... >

"Impossible. You..... you won't be able to protect me. Taito is the only one who can protect....."

< That's not true. I was born only for the sake of protecting you. I was born to keep you company, so that you don't live in loneliness. >

"..... but..... but, I was lonely. You..... you can't fill the gaps in my heart. Taito is the only who can fill them. Taito is the only who had found me. So, Taito..... have some confidence....."

Said Himea. With her rabbit-like eyes looking at him. Within the depths of those eyes were her usual kindness, mischievousness, but yet tinged with sadness,

"..... Taito."

She called her name.

She called her name in a teary voice.

"Taito..... protect me. If you would embrace me..... he would disappear. The other me who was born from my extreme loneliness --- Bahlskra, would disappear."

She said.

Taito's eyes widened.

The red-eyed monster called Bahlskra who had taken over her body appeared to be an alternate personality born from herself.

Then.

Then, when Bahlskra said that he wanted to save her, they were words that had come from her very self?

Those words of Bahlskra, about Taito having broken and blemished her ---

But, as he was thinking, Himea spoke.

"I love you."

"I love you, Taito."

She said. And she spread her arms. She spread her arms wide as if she was ready to accept Taito into her embrace. Smiling gently.

"..... now, let's end this. Taito, embrace me....."

In response to those words,

< ..... are you planning to retrieve the power of immortality granted to that human and use it to erase me? >

"....."

< You are mad. You are insane. If you erase me..... if you erase me, you'll die you know? >

"....."

< The **<< Tenma >>** is already coming. The **<< Tenma >>** is coming to attack the you who have lost your powers. That's why I awoke. I awoke to save you. If you kill me..... >

However, she ignored those words and looked intently at Taito,

"Now, hurry."

She said.

"Hurry up and hug me, Taito. That will put everything to an end. And then, we can be together again."

She said.

But, on hearing that, for some reason, Taito sensed that something was amiss.

However, as if to erase that uncomfortable feeling, Bahlskra spoke.

< Wait. Stop, Saitohimea..... ahh, damn. It's your fault, human. If you really love her, then don't do it. If I disappear..... things will turn for the worse. If I disappear, she will really lose her life. >

"Lies. Don't believe him. I won't disappear. If Taito stays by my side, I won't....."

< What are you saying? That can't be right, isn't it? That's not how things work. That's not how..... >

"Just listen to me, Taito. Let's stop this farce and end it, shall we? Embrace me. And we shall terminate the existence of this puny Bahlskra."

She said.

Spreading both arms.

She took a step forward.

With a smiling face that was on the verge tears, she looked at her intently.

Those eyes were indeed red.

Red like a rabbit.

Taito looked intently at those eyes.

Taito looked intently at that smile.

He looked intently at that beautiful face, that kind and mischievous expression of Himea that had taken the place of that belittling expression of Bahlskra a while ago.

And then,

"Come."

She said.

"Embrace me."

Himea said.

However, while looking intently at her ---

"..... who the hell are you?"

He asked.

On hearing that, Himea smiled,

"What are you talking about? I'm Himea."

She said.

She said in a similar voice as Himea, with a similar smile as Himea.

However,

"..... you're lying. Himea will never have that kind of mean smile."

On hearing those words.

Himea smiled again. She smiled with a kind-looking, mischievous-looking face. But that mouth of hers was gradually contorting. A contorted mocking smile filled with delight and amusement surfaced,

<< Ah-ha, ah-ha, ah-hahahahahahaha, I've been seen through huh. Such a human, such a human could actually see through me..... this is a surpise..... >>

A high-pitched voice said. It was like a completely different personality had emerged from within, speaking in the high-pitched voice of a woman different from Himea, and different from Bahlskra as well.

In response to that,

< ..... what, are you..... >

Bahlskra spoke in a surprised voice.

And replying to that,

<< I won't tell you ~. But then again, I thought that I made the switch at a good timing though ~. Ah-haha. Well, whatever. Anyway, Taito, just hug me. Everything will then come to an end. >>

The high-pitched voice said. And she took another step forward.

Responding frantically,

< Stop. If you erase me, Saitohimea will really die..... >

<< I said shut up ~. It doesn't really matter to me. Hurry up and do it. At any rate, Saitohimea is as good as dead for falling in love with such trash. Now, embrace me, human. Hug me. Or do you need me to remove my clothes? Will that be more exciting? >>

As she said that, she removed the ribbon at her bosom. And tossed it away. *Ah-haha*, she laughed.

On seeing that, Taito grimaced,

"Himea!"

He called out.

But she did not reply. Her face, the face which Taito knew well, did not return.

Bahlskra said.

< When was it? When did you start impersonating Saitohimea? >

<< Didn't I tell you to shut up already ~. Ah, ah, but whatever. Since you're going to be erased anyway. Since I'm going to take away Taito's powers and erase you, feel free to keep on whining. >>

< Stop..... >

<< I won't stop. Ah-hahahaha. Now Taito, let's have some fun~ >>

The impersonator said something incomprehensible with Himea's face. About to close in on him.

< Stop..... >

Bahlskra said.

< Damn..... this fella is stronger than me..... get away, human. Right now, right now, just by being here..... >

<< No way no way. I'm going to have some fun with Taito. Now, come over. I'll let you have a taste of something awesome. >>

On saying that, she came closer to him. In a delightful manner, she came closer.

But tears were still flowing from her eyes. Red tears were still flowing.

Taito looked intently at those tears,

"..... Himea, you're there right? Answer me please."

He said.

<< She's not there. I've already devoured her. >>

"Lair."

<< It's true ~. I've devoured her. She was a tasty one ~. So give it up and go out with me. I'm definitely much more fun to..... >>

"Shut up, bitch. Hand over Himea now. I'll only listen to Himea....."

<< Didn't I tell you that she's no longer around ~. Such a thick-headed kid. >>

She said in a cheerful tone.

She said while her tears were flowing.

Looking intently at that,

"Then, why are you crying? Himea is the one crying right? You're the one who made her cry right?"

He said as he glared at her.

Continuing to smile, she brushed her tears off with a finger.

<< Uwah, you're right. That girl is crying. Laughable. But, even so, all that crying won't change anything..... >>

But she got cut off,

< .....enough of that..... just get away, human. I will hold her back..... that's also what Saitohimea will wish for..... >

<< No, she doesn't ~. She also wants to have some fun with Taito you know ~ <3. Now, now, let's do it. And let's erase this annoying Bahlskra. >>

On saying that, she took another step forward. And closed in on him.

On seeing that, Taito retreated a step.

"Himea."

He called her name again.

Even while he was confused as to who was who, and who to listen to, still,

"Himea!"

He hollered.

A smile then floated on her face,

<< I told you I've devoured her. >>

"Shut up."

<< No, well, not entirely yet though. But, much of her consciousness has already been devoured by me. >>

"Shut up."

<< But, at any rate, the thing that you've fallen for is this beautiful appearance right? You meaningless human are lusting only for the flesh, aren't you? Then, it's fine right? Let me be your partner..... I'll only make you feel good. >>

"Didn't I tell you to shut up!"

<< Ah-hahaha, you're so forceful ~. Well then, to accommodate the shy Taito, perhaps I should remove my skirt. >>

A foolish thing she had said. Cheerfully, she unfastened the clip of her skirt.

However, Taito ignored that and said.

"Himea."

He then yelled.

"Himea!"

Inside the dark school without a single light,

"Answer me, Himea!!"

He hollered at the top of his lungs.

And then, her hand stopped. Her hand left her skirt, and she turned her face towards him. With dark face seemingly shrouded in shadows, she looked at him,

<< ..... ah-ha, ah-hahaha, what's with the hollering..... even when you have never really accepted that girl's feelings. The truth is you have never intended to fill the gaps of her loneliness..... that girl, she realized it you know? The truth is you don't really care about feelings, do you? You're just going along with what's convenient for you..... but you really intend to ditch her right? But yet, you easily called her name in such a familiar way ~ >>

She said to him.

Taito then looked intently at her. She was indeed crying. Her tears continued flowing.

Looking at her face,

"..... that's not it. I too....."

But, Himea smiled.

<< Lies, lies. Then, what about Haruka-chan ~? What are you going to do about the kind, gentle Haruka-chan who made you a bento ~? >>

"....."

<< See, you can't answer. Now, you have no right to call her by her name anymore. Ah-hahahaha. Well then, this is the end. Everything will end. So now, at least..... hug me, comfort me. With that, everything will end. It's time for me to disappear, hug me and comfort me. >>

She said. She said it in a mocking manner, as if she was mocking everything.

Taito stared at her in a dumbfounded manner.

"....."

The voice which had sounded like some other strange monster had just sounded a little more like Himea's voice, and consequently, Taito stared at her in a dumbfounded manner.

With tears flowing, she was clearly shaking in insecurity.

And he started thinking about the words she had said.

*Even when you have never really accepted that girl's feelings.*

*You're just going along with what's convenient for you but you really intend to ditch her right?*

*What about Haruka-chan?*

*See, you can't answer.*

*At least hug me, comfort me.*

*With that, everything will end.'*

*It's time for me to disappear.*

After pondering about those lines,

"Himea."

Taito called her name again.

On hearing that, with tears flowing,

<< Didn't I tell you not to call me in such a familiar way? >>

She said.

Ignoring her,

"..... Himea is."

He said.

"..... Himea is..... felling insecure?"

He said.

<< ..... who are you talking to? Did I not tell you that she is no longer around? >>

She said. She said while crying.

But, Taito ignored her and continued.

"..... no, it's a not surprising that you were insecure..... in spite of throwing your life away and coming to save me..... in spite of having waited for me for the past nine years..... but yet, I didn't give a proper answer to what Himea said."

As he said that, he remembered.

After she had come back to him, for umpteen times, whenever she told him that she loved him, he had always made a troubled face.

Whenever she flew into his arms and told him how joyful she was to be with him, how blessed she felt to be with him, he had never properly answered her.

He had never said them.

Words like *I'm also happy that Himea has come back to me*, and words like *I'm also having fun with Himea by my side*.

He had only made a troubled face. When she came back suddenly, he only had an expression of uncertainty on him.

Even when she had waited for him for the past nine years.

Even when she had thrown her life away to return him back to life.

And because of that, she didn't have much time left to live.

"..... and I didn't even..... I didn't even give a proper answer."

Taito said.

And he remembered the promise they had exchanged with each other in the past.

And he remembered the promise they had exchanged with each other nine years ago.

She had said.

As she injected << Black Magic **P o i s o n** >> into his neck, she had said with a serious expression.

*"Tell me you love me."*

She had said.

*"When you do that, the << Black Magic **P o i s o n** >> will be completed. Or is it that..... is it that you hate me?"*

On hearing those words.

On hearing those words said by a girl who had an unsettled face unlike her usual strong-willed look, Taito had replied.

In order to make her feel settled.

In order to bring her usual smile back to her usually mischievous looking face, Taito had said.

*"I..... I also love you, Himea."*

In that instant, the magic bounded the two of them.

In that instant, the << Black Magic **P o i s o n** >> bounded them.

She had said that it was a magic that binds two people in love together for eternity.

She had said it in a delightful manner.

She had said it in a joyful manner.

And she had believed it.

Nine years.

For those nine years. She alone had believed in Taito's words.

But yet, when she was free, Taito had not responded to those words. On top of that, he had a childhood friend with whom he was on friendly terms by his side, and was making either a troubled face or 'you got me' face, carrying a shitty attitude along those lines.

"So, this is it....."

Taito murmured.

"This is what is making Himea insecure....."

Taito murmured.

She was still crying. Red tears were still flowing. And then,

<< Are you an idiot? What's with that 'I got it' face? Disgusting. Well whatever, quickly hand over your power. With that power, I can kill Bahlskra and free myself. >>

She said.

But, Taito did not hear those words. Ignoring those words,

"You know, Himea. Were you broken..... because of that insecurity?"

<< Didn't I tell you that you're disgusting..... >>

"Tell me. Was it because I didn't keep my promise..... was it because I didn't give a reply to you that caused you to become all weird?"

<< Ahhhhhhhhhh, how annoying. Shut up shut up. Can you shut up already? I've told you that Saitohimea is no longer around. >>

However, ignoring that, Taito continued.

"If that's the case..... if that's the case, then there's no need to be like that you know. I'll give you my reply properly. I will give a proper reply to your feelings....."

<< Shut up, shut up, shut up..... that girl had conferred much of her power onto you as a result, she had disappeared..... ahhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh, this is irritating. What's this? What the hell's this? Enough, enough of this. I'll kill you. I'll this fella..... with my power, even without you, I can still erase Bahlskra! >>

As she said that, she raised her hand. She raised her right hand. And once again, red jelly was formed.

However, Taito looked straight at it.

< Dodge, idiot. >

Bahlskra's voice spoke for some reason, but Taito ignored that and looked straight ahead. The jelly was released. And struck his head. His head was blown away, but it regenerated right away.

Himea's face then contorted.

<< Damn..... fifteen minutes have already passed..... then, I shall kill you seven times straight! >>

She hollered. She hollered crazily.

However, without moving, Taito merely looked straight at her,

"I'm probably....."

He said.

"I'm probably, also..... fond of Himea you know."

He said. And he took a step closer to her.

<< Sh-shut up! >>

Himea hollered. And fired off red jelly again. Taito's upper body disappeared. His consciousness disappeared as well. And he started regenerating immediately again.

With his regenerated eyes, he looked intently at her,

"..... it's the truth. I also....."

<< Shut upppppppppppppppppppppppppp >>

The red jelly was released again. Twice. Thrice, it was released consecutively. Each time, Taito regenerated. And he took another step closer.

With that, he had died a total of five times.

He could only afford to die one more time.

If he died another two times, he wouldn't be able to come back to life anymore.

However.

"..... so Himea, come back. There's nothing for you to feel insecure about. I'll protect you, so..... so go back to the way you wer....."

<< I told you she's not there! I told you that Saitohimea is no longer around right! You're really noisy. All this time, you've really noisy you know! >>

On saying that, she released her jelly again. And that hand that was firing off the jelly was held back by the other hand of hers. And then,

< Fool..... this fella is speaking the truth..... all this while, I can't feel the presence of Saitohimea's power at all..... so quickly get out of here. Or you'll be killed. If that happens..... if that happens, Saitohimea may disappear for real. That's how important..... your existence is to Saitohimea..... >

But, in the midst of his sentence,

<< You shut up too. Everyone shut up. Everyone..... each and everyone of you are damn noisy!? >>

She hollered in a high pitched voice. She hollered in a teary voice. She hollered in agitation.

And she shook off Bahlskra's hand, and pointed her hand towards Taito. And released her jelly. Consequently, Taito's life was extinguished readily.

That was the sixth time.

He had been killed six times.

Now, he could no longer revive.

The next time would be the final death for Taito.

Bahlskra said.

< Hurry up and run, fool. I can no longer suppress this fella with my power..... >

<< Ah-hahahahahahahaha this is the end, the end, the enddd..... one time, and you'll be dead. And Saitohimea will die as well. And Bahlskra's existence will become meaningless as well. And everything will end. This pain will end. This pain in my chest will end. And my madness will end. Now, die. Everyone, please disappear? >>

After saying that, she stretched her arm. She stretched her arm towards Taito.

Even as he looked intently at that hand, he took another step closer to her. He was now almost within touching distance from her hand.

And then.

"Fine."

He said.

"..... I'm fine..... with Himea killing me. In the first place, I'm alive because you have given me yours. If you really don't have much time to live..... then, I'm fine with dying with you. But....."

Taito put his hand forth and touched her hand. He touched the hand that was about to give birth to the red jelly. And grabbed it. Even when she screamed she was going to release it, she did not. She definitely would not. And with that, he placed her hand on his own face. If, in this position, she were to release her jelly, his head would be blown away once again. If that were to happen, Taito would not be able to come back to life. He would not be able to come back to life again.

However, he was already indifferent to that. He only clasped her hand strongly and put it against his cheek,

"..... but, before I die, I have something to say to you. I have yet to tell you this. I have yet to tell you I love you. Because I have yet to tell you that..... can you wake up so that you can hear me properly?"

<< Shut..... >>

"I love you, Himea."

<< ..... >>

"I love you."

<< ..... >>

"So please don't feel so unsettled."

<< ..... >>

"I'll always be by your side."

<< ..... >>

"I'll never let you be alone again."

<< ..... >>

"So."

<< ..... >>

"Take my life if you wish."

<< ..... >>

"So, show me your smile again."

<< ..... >>

"I love your smiling face the most."

After saying that, Taito closed his eyes. And he kissed her hand. With tears flowing, he kissed her hand.

As he did that, her hand shivered. Her thumb searched for Taito's lips. And touched them gently.

And then.

"..... dummy."

Said Himea.

Taito then opened his eyes, and there she was.

The usual Himea.

Her eyes were no longer red like the rabbit. Her tears were no longer red.

With mischievous-looking, but yet kind-looking eyes, she looked intently at him. She sniffed. She sniffed up her tears.

"..... slowpoke."

She said.

Looking at her face, Taito smiled.

"Sorry."

He replied.

She then hugged him, and started in a slightly strong tone,

"What if you really die....."

"Sorry."

"If my consciousness did not return..... if in the event that my consciousness did not return, you'll die you know?"

Once again, Taito apologized. And with that, he returned her embrace. He embraced her slender body with so much strength that one might wonder whether that slender body would get crushed by that strong embrace.

And then.

"Sorry for not paying attention to you all this while."

He said.

And she remained in his embrace for a while, then,

"It's okay."

She said.

"Since you have told me you love me, I've become invincible."

She said.

On hearing that, Taito smiled,

"..... if you're invincible, that could be dangerous."

"Yeah."

"So, you're fine now?"

"Yup."

"What about Bahlskra?"

She then replied promptly,

"He's there."

As she replied, Taito pushed her away from his chest in a slight movement. And looked at her face.

"Ehh? Then, what about the other woman....."

"She's also there. Now that my strength has returned, she is staying quiet for now..... but she is indeed there."

Taito then panicked and looked intently at her. After ascertaining that the face, manner, and expression were no doubt those of Himea,

"..... erm, ah ~, even though I don't really get it..... what on earth happened just now? Were they Himea's alternate personalities?"

She shook her head in response.

"Nope. That's not it. It was magic."

"Magic?"

"Yeah. The first stage of magic to using **<< Bliss >>**."

"..... Bliss? First stage? Erm, I can't really see where this is going....."

But,

"Don't worry about that. They won't come out anymore. I'm sorry for putting you through....."

As she said that, she stepped away from Taito, and looked around her. She found her ribbon on the floor and picked it up. Then tied it back to her bosom.

While Taito was looking at that.

While Taito was looking at the usual Himea, he asked.

"..... but, regarding what they said earlier....."

However, at that moment,

"Forget them."

She cut him off.

But, that was not something he could just forget. The words of Bahlskra, as well as the words of that woman with a high-pitched voice, were not something he could just forget.

Taito continued.

"Just now, when Bahlskra talked about..... that not much of your life is left....."

"I'll be fine, so don't worry about it."

She said to him, but,

"No no, you can't be fine right. It's my fault right? In order to bring me back to life, you....."

However, she just looked at him. She looked at him with a delighted face. And she smiled. Smiling with her usual strong-willed eyes. Keeping quiet, she smiled.

And then,

"Taito."

"Hn?"

"I love you."

"Hey, don't gloss it over....."

But, all of a sudden, she came flying into his chest. On top of that, she pulled her body up and pressed her lips against his own.

"....."

She totally evaded the question.

And with that, her lips left him. But even so, he could feel his heart racing, racing, racing,

"Wh-wh-what's that?"

Taito asked, and she smiled mischievously,

"Ermmm ~"

She said. Her face blushed slightly in embarrassment.

"Taito, I love you very much."

"No, erm....."

"How about you?"

"Eh? Ah ~"

"Do you love me?"

On hearing those words.

Taito made a troubled face again. He looked up at the dark ceiling, following that, he looked back at the ground, and tried to hide his blushing face,

"..... yeah, ermm..... I love you too."

He said. After saying that, he groaned silently to himself, chiding himself for getting overly embarrassed when he said the words 'I love you'.

Peering at his face,

"Your face is red."

Himea said.

"That goes the same for you."

As Taito said that, *ah-haha*, she laughed. And he laughed too, following that he raised his face,

"So, is everything over? With regards to some incomprehensible power rampaging in your body, and causing red rain to fall; are they all over?"

At his query,

"No. I wasn't the cause of the red rain."

She said.

On hearing that, Taito said,

"Eh? Then who caused it? Was it the one called Bahlskra who took over your body to....."

But she shook her head,

"No. Bahlskra came to help me..... as I was becoming too weak."

"Help you?"

"Yeah."

"From what?"

And she replied.

With one word.

"**<< Tenma >>**."

She said.

In that instant.

*Kachi kachi kachi* sounds could be heard from behind him. The sounds resembling those biting sounds of insects from the schoolyard could be heard.

The unpleasant sounds of *kachi kachi* coming from the stairs at the end of the corridor could be heard.

In response to that,

"Eh?"

As Taito was about to turn around,

"Don't turn around."

Himea held him back. And she smiled.

"We kissed huh."

She said something which should not be said in a *'this is not the time for that'* kind of situation,

"Erm, Himea, this is not the time for....."

"And I was really happy when you told me you love me."

"Erm, well, as I was saying, this is not....."

But she cut him off,

"That's why..... I don't have any more regrets."

On hearing those words,

"..... huh? Hey, wait, Himea, what....."

But, even as his body moved and pulled away from her --- for some reason, he could not move. He could not move a single finger. Restrained by some strange power, his body could not move on his volition.

On realizing that,

"What's this?"

Taito uttered in surprise and Himea gazed at that surprised face with sheer joy. She gazed at him happily. And then for just an instant. For just a single instant, she made a sad and lonely face.

And then.

"I was really lying though. I was lying about not having regrets but..... this is enough."

"Wait a minute. Don't go on talking by yourself. What is happening? What is happening here now....."

But, she placed a finger on his mouth. *Hush*, she said. With a sad, smiling face, *hush*, she said.

And then.

"Quiet. This is the last time, so show me a smiling face."

Even when she said that, there was no way he could smile. There was no way he could make a smiling face.

"What's the matter? What are you planning....."

Himea took a peek behind Taito. At the end of the corridor. She looked straight, intently, at the darkness,

"That thing is after me."

"That thing, you say, is it the Tenma that Bahlskra was talking about earlier?"

"Yeah."

"What the hell is that? Is the same T e n m a **Martes Devil** whose power you conferred on me....."

"They are two different things. This is something worse, of a totally different nature. If I continue to remain here, not only you, but the school, the world, everything will be made bad by it. But if I go..... if I get ravaged by its power and

disappear, the world will be preserved for some time. At least, for the rest of your life span....."

However, she did not finish. Her sad face became a smiling one,

"Kidding. Since this is it, there's no real need to get into such details."

She said.

"Well, see you. Taito..... make sure you attain happiness with that Haruka-chan in this world."

She said.

"I was really happy when you said you love me towards the end."

She said.

"I guess I can say that there is some worth to my life."

As she said that, once again, she stretched herself. And kissed Taito on his cheek lightly. Following that,

"Bye bye, Taito. I love you very much."

After saying that, she started walking in the direction behind him.

She started walking towards the end of the corridor, where the strange *kachi kachi kachi* sounds, which were still going on, were coming from.

On seeing that,

"....."

*Don't shit with me*, Taito thought.

*What the hell is this?*, he thought.

*And just when I thought you were saved, what the hell is happening this time*, he thought.

And he remembered. *Is that it?*, he remembered. The words that Bahlskra had said. Regarding how she had not much time left to live.

In order to bring Taito back to life, she had lost her powers to defend against the Tenma. That's why she didn't have much time left to live.

Because of Taito.

"..... will Himea die because of me.....?"

He groaned.

And he tried moving his arm. He tried turning around. But, it seemed like he was restrained by some powerful force and couldn't move at all.

But,

"Himea, wait a minute."

He said.

"Remove the restraining force on me!"

He yelled.

But, there was no reply. There was no reply from her. And Taito said,

"Don't shit with me. I'll definitely, definitely not let you go."

And he tried to move his body with all his strength.

"Just now, you said we are going to be together forever, but yet, you are planning to lie to me again? Don't underestimate me. I'll definitely....."

And at that moment, his right arm could move a little. His right leg too.

"I'll definitely not let you go there alone....."

He bit his lips. He bit his lips with the same amount of force he would use for gritting his teeth. And his left leg was able to move too. And with his right arm which was capable of partial movement, he punched his own face. He punched his own face with everything he got. With that, his body started turning behind. His face turned towards his back. His eyes turned towards his back.

And then, the scenery behind him came into his view for an instant.

He could see a darkness that was darker than darkness closing in from the end of the corridor. With *kachi kachi kachi* noises ringing out, something strange.....

But, at that moment.

"Don't turn around."

Shouted Himea.

With that, his eyes were covered by Himea's hand.

"Don't look. Why did you turn around!? Just by looking, just by setting your eyes on that as a human, your existence would disappear you know!?"

She said in a panicky voice.

But, he grabbed hold of her arm. And he wrapped his arm around her waist. And then said,

"Then, don't go. Don't dump me here....."

"But, but, if I don't go....."

But her words were cut off,

"The hell I care about that. If Himea is going to sacrifice herself, I'll die with you. Even though I don't really know the meaning of getting my existence erased, but the hell I care. I'll disappear with you."

"Hey, don't be foolish, Taito, stop being willful....."

However,

"Aren't you the willful one here!"

Taito screamed.

"Don't say things like 'I'm going alone'. Don't shoulder everything by yourself. Why are you not saying anything and taking on everything by yourself? Don't go about bearing all the pain by yourself. If you don't say anything at all..... if you don't tell me anything at all and bear all the pain by yourself, I'll be crushed right!"

On hearing that,

"....."

Himea remained silent. He could only tell that her hand was shaking. He could tell that she was shaking slightly.

And he said to her,

"So, tell me more about the current situation. Then, let's resolve it together. Even if I'm totally unreliable and can't help you in anyway, there is still that irritating student council president right..... so..... so let's fight together. Don't just give up and say you're going to die. There's definitely a way out. If we just make our way to the student council room....."

However,

"Impossible."

She said, but,

"There's nothing that's impossible."

On saying that, he took her hand away from his face. Of course, he didn't turn around. She had said that a human who set eyes on what was behind him would have his existence erased. Then, it probably would really happen the way she had said.

That's why Taito did not turn around.

He only looked intently at Himea,

"I'll save you."

"Impo....."

"Shut up. I'll save you. So, you should do your best with me too."

"....."

"Let's head to the student council room. Let's seek Gekkou's help. But, since the stairs are already blocked, we can't get down to the next floor."

"....."

"So we shall drop down from the veranda of the AV room."

"....."

"Then, we'll have Gekkou open portal to another dimension, and get away from the Tenma. After that, we can figure out how to deal with the Tenma. Okay?"

As he said that, she smiled with a troubled, teary face,

"..... jeez, I didn't remember bringing you up to be such a willful kid....."

She said.

And he smiled,

"Is that so? I've always been willful you know?"

After saying that, he started to move. He grabbed her hand and pulled. In order not to let her go back to being alone again, he pulled her along strongly.

And she followed. Even though he could not turn around, he could feel that she was following along.

And then, acknowledging satisfactorily,

"Alright, let's go."

Taito said.

And they entered the AV room.

The windows of the AV room had totally dissolved into nothingness earlier from the red jelly released by Himea. And even the veranda had a large gaping hole created as a result of the aftermath.

"Alright. We can descend without getting the rain on us....."

He said.

"Himea, are you able to follow after me?"

He asked.

"Yup."

She said.

"I'll be right behind you."

She said.

Following that, he nodded once more was about to jump off the veranda.

He could see the scene before him outside the window.

The blood red moon had risen into the sky.

And from mass of clouds that were covering the moon, red rain was still falling.

Looking intently at that, Taito said,

"Now, let's go."

And he jumped down, to the next floor below.

And the two of them descended to the fifth floor where the student council room was.

♦♦♦♦

The place shifted a little bit from there.

It shifted to a location where a dimensional warp existed in the space.

That was the other side of the rift on the wall of the student council room.

Much more further in.

It was a totally red world.

A world where everything was red.

Red earth, red sky.

All the way till the edge of the horizon, it was red, red, red.

The red was way too red,

"..... damn. My eyes hurt."

Gekkou muttered. After blinking two, three times, he looked at his surroundings exasperatedly, and after that,

"Well?"

He said.

"Why did you bring me here?"

He said.

Following that, from behind him, Mirai started,

"Yeah yeah yeah! Why on earth did we come here....."

"You're too loud. Just shut up."

"Eeeehhhhhhhhh!?"

"Just shut up."

Gekkou said as he turned his head around. He looked intently at her with half-opened eyes.

Looking intently at that electrified hair, and the body that was clad in a sailor uniform, at the lightning girl who seemed to have come from a manga,

"Do you know, Mirai. I didn't really sleep today. And I'm sleep-deprived. When that happens, I'm in a real foul mood. Listening to your *kii kii* screeching sounds really makes my head hurt. So, keep quiet."

On hearing Gekkou's words however, Mirai puffed up her cheeks in anger. She desperately tried to moved her calm looking eyes upwards to glower at him,

"I'm not screeching!"

"*Pii pii* then."

"Neither did I go *pii pii*! Hey, that sounds like I'm having diarrhea rightttttttt!"

Mirai's hollering was really making Gekkou's head hurt and he covered his ears. He took an exasperated breath. And then,

"....."

Ignored her for now.

"Don't ignore meeeeeeeeee!"

And he ignored the hollering from the diarrhea brat behind him.

With that, he looked to the front again,

"In other words, that's what it means."

He said.

"I'm somewhat sleep-deprived and in a foul mood. Depending on circumstances, I might kill you, get it?"

He said. And he drew his sword from his waist. And swiftly, he swung it back in a downward direction, poised. To show he was ready for a fight at anytime.

And then.

"....."

And then, he looked up at something before him.

He looked up at a humongous creature, which appeared to be a hundred times larger than him at least, before him.

"....."

The creature bore some resemblance to a dragon from the fairy tales, but, because it was too humongous, he was unable to see its entire body, and as such, he was unable to tell what its true form was.

Even as he looked up at this dragon-like creature, it was like looking up at a mountain, he felt.

How could he fight it? For an instance, such a self-mocking laugh came from within the depths of his mind, however, he suppressed it and said.

"So, what do you want with me?"

On hearing that, the mountain-like creature answered.

<< I just wanted to take a look at your face. >>

He could tell whether the voice belonged to a male or a female. However, he was certain that it did not belong to a human.

*Well, it's a mountain after all* --- he muttered in his heart and felt like laughing. Somehow, it seemed like he was really in badly need of sleep.

Looking up at the mountain-like, dragon-like creature, he went on.

"To look at my face, you say?"

<< Yeah. >>

"For what?"

<< Because I wanted to know what kind of crow has been chosen this time. >>

"I'm not a crow. I'm a human."

<< Ha-ha-ha, hahaha, ha-ha-ha. >>

The sounds of laughter coming down from that mountain made Gekkou scowl.

"Shut up. Your laughter is getting on my nerves. And makes my brain hurt."

After saying that, the mountain laughed again.

<< This time round, we have an interesting fella again. So, what are you? >>

"I'm a genius."

However, for some reason, that was ignored.

<< Are you the right head that bears the darkness? >>

"Darkness?"

<< Yeah. >>

"I don't get you."

<< You don't get it huh. >>

"Yeah."

<< Then..... then, the one who is shouldering the darkness in agony must be your little brother. >>

On hearing those words, Gekkou's eyes widened. With some of his fatigue flying away, his eyes widened.

"Do you know my little brother?"

<< Yeah. But that's fine. More importantly, in the distance, the light rises..... the moon..... the red moon weeps..... the mad witch weeps. The right head of the crow weeps. And you, the left head, what kind of sound will you make? >>

The voice said. The voice said something incomprehensible. And without answering his question, the mountain-like, dragon-like monster had went on.

In response to that,

"Answer my question."

<< Ha-ha-ha, hahaha. >>

"Didn't I tell you that your laughter is getting on my nerves? I'll really kill you, you know?"

<< Ha-haha, hahaha >>

Gekkou then thrust his sword into the ground. No, not the ground, but a part of that red monster.

This entire world was a part of that monster.

Impaling a part of the body of that monster,

"..... exorcise this fella, Spell Error **Wicked Blade**."

He murmured. And then, the sword,

"....."

The sword had no reaction.

The Spell Error **Wicked Blade** that should be able to exorcise everything had no reaction.

He looked at it, then looked up to the sky,

"Bastard, what the hell are you?"

He asked.

And the voice from sky descended.

It was indeed a strange voice, a voice which Gekkou could not tell to belong to a male or female.

<< **Tenma**. >>

It said.

<< I came to lend the crow a hand. >>

It said.

And then,

<< I came to tell you the way to kill that witch..... that mad **<<** R a m i e l L i l i t h **Most Ancient Witch >>** who has made the world an anomaly. >>

And that was what the Tenma said.

# Afterword

The second volume of **"Itsuka Tenma no Kuro Usagi"** has already been published! How was it?

Even though the story started in the first volume and covered an important part of the story, in this volume at last, the setting of the story has been established, and the real story has properly started. To put it in another way, the first volume follows mainly the perspective of the ignorant Taito, who as an ordinary high school student, got embroiled into an irregular story; so as to speak, the appearance of the world and the characters were introduced in that volume, but, from this volume onward, things shall shape up properly. Right from the beginning, I was told that I could write this with a continuation in mind, and a serialization has already been decided, that's why this time round, right from the beginning, the story will encompass a humongous amount of material.

At any rate, the first volume was only a foreshadowing, and the unexplained things will start appearing incessantly and made known, just so you know. What in the world is the Tenma? What on earth is the Dark Rabbit? What about Bahlskra? And **<< Bliss >>**? Well, this is just the second volume, so it's not really possible to explain every single thing, however, the main focus will be how will everyone battle with, the various darkness shouldered, together with the true agony which will appear at one go.

By the way, when this volume 2 was first handed to my editor-in-charge, bishoujo Catherine-san, this was her reaction.

*"Eehh~, doesn't this seem like we're nearing the end! Is this really alright?"*

And on top of the that, the editor-in-chief asked,

*"Kagami-san, are you planning to end this at volume 3?"*

And I was like, *Even though volume 2 is going with a bang! It'll be fine.* The truth is Itsuten's subject material is pretty humongous, so even with this pace, it'll be fine. In volume 1, the parts where one may be thinking, *how is this going to turn out*, are in fact foreshadowing moments! In volume 2, the *eeeeeeeeehhhhhhh* surprising parts will be (ah, but, since this is just volume 2, it is a secret) ermm, well, that guy will do that thing and it will into something like that....., things like that will come aplenty. But yet, in the same merry manner as before, Itsuten will go with a big bang! Since there will be a lot of material to cover, the development will be a little fast. So, please give me your support!

Well, as we're talking about the work, by the way.

Firstly, I offer my thanks. Initially, we were all fretting and were so nerve-wrecked and scared, and the editorial department was in such uproar that it seemed like we were having a festival of some sort; that was how bad it was. *What should we do if this doesn't sell*; although my editor-in-charge Catherine-san was shaking in fear, when the lid was open, somehow, thanks to everyone, it has become something awesome. Well, in order to show you how much me and my editor-in-charge Catherine-san were shivering in fear, I'll let you in on one of our conversations.

"Ka-Kagami-san."

"Yes."

"Y-your new work is about to be launched right!"

"When you tell me this, I'm going to get anxious and lose sleep over it, so don't remind me about it!"

"By the way, have you heard of this particular jinx which I've heard happens to manga a lot?"

"What is it?"

"The author of a best-seller will have his next work end up in a flop."

"Don't give me bad omenssssssssssssssss."

"On top of that, Kagami-san, in a miraculous way, after your first work 'Bukan Bengoshi Eru Win'[7], your second work, 'Densetsu no Yuusha no Densetsu', managed to continue to sell."

"I'm grateful for that."

"But to continue this streak for your third work may be a little tough!"

"Heyyyyyyyyyyyyy! Why are you so pessimistic?"

"Be-be-be-be-because I'm scared. If this doesn't sell, you know what will happen to me right? You know right? And everyone has been telling me that!"

"Well, that may be scary, I'm also afraid you know!"

"However, the genius me shall overcome this fear, just like Gekkou-kun, I have found a ingenious way!"

"Eh? Seriously? What's that?"

"Immediately following the release day, I shall go on a tour to Singapore!"

"Aren't you running away from reality! Then, I shall go as well! I'll go to Bali!"

"Why Bali?"

"Because I want to. By the way, Catherine, why did you choose Singapore?"

"Because I want to."

""Yeah!!""

While 80% of that foolish conversation is a joke, after the release day, my editor-in-charge worked many late nights to finish her work, and really went to Singapore! And then, after she came back to the editorial department, somehow, Itsuten managed to sell very well and

she received applause from the entire editorial department. Even though I didn't receive any applause, my editor-in-charge who went to Singapore actually did! (LOL)

Well, jokes aside, I, my editor-in-charge, and the whole editorial department, while we really trembling, have to express our gratitude to the readers, you, and thanks to you, the story about me getting dried up in the sun will not come to pass somehow! Yay! I survived!

Well, the battle will start from here, though today I'm still alive thanks to everyone!

Everyone, thank you!

To show more of my courtesy, from now on, I shall work hard to write an interesting story that can be enjoyed by everyone, so please continue to support me!

By the way, this afterword was written on the day after the signing event one week after volume 1 was released. After meeting you all yesterday, I have an increasing desire to seriously work harder. Everyone of you is so kind. And ermm, this is something I always say, but I haven't yet written this in the afterword of Itsuten, and I have to write this. Then again, for those who have read in the afterwords of other series by me, you might tire of this, so sorry.

But, I'll say it. A novel belongs to everyone. Of course, without the readers, it will be nothing. That's why, thanks to everyone's support, I'm able to write this and the publisher can publish it. I must never forget the gratitude that I must rightfully have. So, thank you, everyone! The editorial department and I love you guys! We hope we can always answer to your expectations.

So, let us all make this "Itsuka Tenma no Kuro Usagi", a story which has just only begun, together. Please continue to give your support!

Alright, I'm done with the necessary!

Now now, since the number of pages left are fast disappearing, I shall move on to the upcoming schedule ~.

By the way, right now, we are in the middle of the 6-month consecutive release spree. This book is the third in line. Back to the main point!

So, "Dai Densetsu no Yuusha no Densetsu 5" will be released next month. The story is also unfolding quickly. Speaking of that, the greatest story in the history of Denyuuden is coming. The war is finally starting. And Ryner is faced with a really difficult choice. But for those who are not reading Denyuuden, you may be wondering, *who the hell is Ryner!* My apologies to you. And because Denyuuden has many volumes, there are also those who are afraid to get into it, it seems, yeah.

I also think so! (LOL)

Why is it that, despite the fact there are so many volumes of Denyuuden, the circulation numbers are not dropping at all, and people are still reading it; that is also puzzling to me! Everyone is really kind! Thanks!

But, if you suddenly wonder whether you want to read it or not, why not challenge yourself and pick up a volume. I think if you try it without being too committed, you might find a surprising appeal to it!

And for those who still think that there are too many volumes, why not try the comics? The truth is that the comic version of Denyuuden was recently sold at last! On the 9th of March, the manga, which will make the story in volume 1 easily understandable, will start serialization under the Dragon Age comic label. Every time I'm asked to do a name check for the manga, I find it to be extremely interesting! Well, try reading that, and if you like it, you might want to try the novels as well, so how about that? Going into the story through comics might be more appealing right? Right? And now, I'm going to make a wonderful announcement! (LOL) I'm sure the editorial department will bring me to a high-class BBQ meat store for a treat to reward me for this..... eh? Hurry up with the manuscript? Ah wah wah wah wah.

Errrrmmmm ~, on the 9th of February, another even more appealing work by Toyota-san, the hilarious 4-panel comic "Nantonaku Densetsu Yuusha no Densetsu (The Legend of the Legendary Heroes Somehow)" will be out. In there, you will also find a mini-short story that I've written. I'll also be getting a copy for myself!

Following that, "Itsuka Tenma no Kuro Usagi 3" will be soon in your face in the month after next! A 6-month consecutive releases is indeed too scary! (LOL)

So, with that, it's time for me to bid you goodbye here, thanks for your support ~.

Kagami Takaya

Kagami Takaya official homepage: http://www.kagamitakaya.com/

# Translator's Notes and References

1. ↑ **Mulder & Scully:** Check out X-files.
2. ↑ **King Enn:** King Enn is the lord and judge of the dead, present in many Asian mythologies and religions like Buddhism, Hinduism, Taoism. Another name is Yama. See here and here.
3. ↑ **Blood Suckers:** Here it was written as 吸血鬼 which would normally be translated to vampires. But since vampire is the reading of the race of "Most Ancient Sorcerer", blood sucker is used instead to avoid ambiguity and confusion.
4. ↑ **Spear of Longinus:** This is referring to the Spear of Longinus, a.k.a Lance of Longinus, a.k.a Holy Lance. There is no particular reason why I chose 'spear' over 'lance' for 槍.
5. ↑ **Tenshi:** Tenshi is written as 天使. Normally this is translated as 'angel', however, like many of the terms in the story, it does equate to the angel we know of, so it will left untranslated. Just a note of interest, is that 使 here implies 'servant'.
6. ↑ **About Maara Hapiyasu:** All my research in 天魔, 第六天魔王波旬, 魔王, 天魔波旬, 魔羅 has indicated that it should really be 'Maara Papiyasu', which leads me to believe that Kagami had made a mistake regarding this. However, I shall follow what he wrote regardless of that, in case there's an actual reason for it. Perhaps it was done on purpose since the Tenma is obviously a different existence. (Edit by a kind soul:) A lot of names of non-japanese beings have evolved in japanese, some to the point of not being recognizable any more; some of those names differ between differents places of Japan. Starting "p" becoming "h" is common in japanese.
7. ↑ **Bukan Bengoshi Eru Win(武官弁護士エル・ウィン):** Bukan Bengoshi Eru Win (Military Officer Lawyer El Win) is the first novel work by Kagami when he debuted at the age of 20. The series was published by Fujimi Shobou under their Fujimi Fantasia Bunko label and spanned a total of 10 volumes, and another 2 volumes of short stories. The 3rd volume was also a winner of the Fujimi Shoubo's 12th Fantasia Novel Award.